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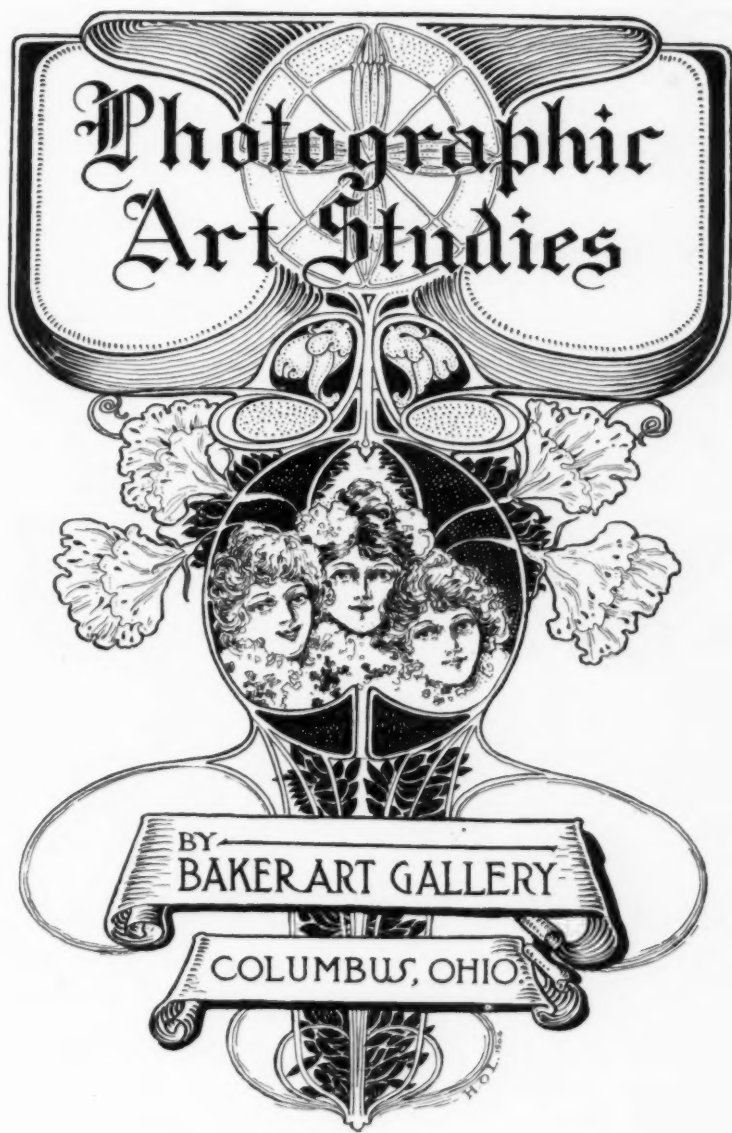
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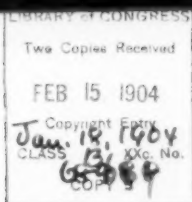
CLARA BLAUDICK



DRAWN BY GUSTAVUS C. WIDNEY

“He heard the chilling cry behind.”

“The Taste of an Afterwhile;” see page 498

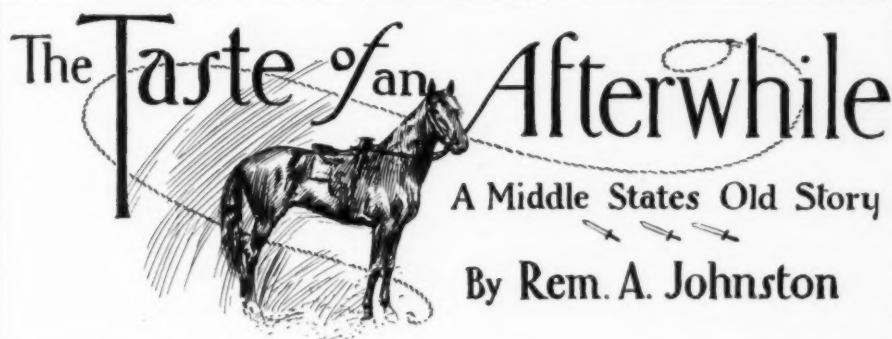


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In his recollection nothing came earlier than the swish of bitter winds, driving and drifting rain and snow through the loft-crevices of the log house where he had made grand entrance. That soughing sound, with its *crescendo* at intervals, rolling up bassoon-deep, increasing *fortissimo*, dying *diminuendo*, irregular, awesome, became to him, after a while, a vehicle into which he could hurl his soul and go whirling, whirling, whirling along like a galloping horse, over roads no man had made, through swamps and forests rank with summer miasmas or bleak with winter deaths. And he would lie under one torn coverlet, in the dead of drear December, when the icy northers turned the woods into frozen dangerous wildernesses, his small hands clutched, the nails biting in through callous blood-deep, his black eyes glittering, his whole attenuated frame wild with the frenzy of Chase, albeit he shivered in his rude bed and dashed the

splintery snow crystals from his matted hair.

He was a child of the woods, from the beginning committed to axe, to flaring log heaps, and the indiscriminate, importunately fierce struggle with forest and marsh. He grew to the feel and touch of it—the blazed path, the panther crouching in the shelving dark, the bear growling in the covert. He knew the taste of a five-mile run when the Free Company howled behind—the metallic grit of snapping teeth closing hungrily as the wolves fell into close trail. Pain, hunger, cold, peril by day at the loggings, terror by night from wild beasts that prowled openly about the cabin, grew in his blood, built themselves into the fiber of his life, until he knew how much he was of scrawny swamp and topping oak-forest alike—understood the unity of all better than the philosophers could have taught him.

If he noticed these things more than others of his age, his rude com-

panions of the woods knew why—the taint of a fallow marriage ran in his veins, and a deathlier taint, mentioned in those days with dread. The weight of a heavy, unutterable destiny bore unnaturally upon the shoulders of his spirit and therefore made him different from other lads, they said. Had he himself known their thoughts, he had fancied why through long sleepless winter nights he stood gaping through the loft-crevices, the galling wind biting his blue lips and turning his eyes to water, until such a time when the Fever came upon him and he could go galloping, galloping off, wild with merciless, relentless, happy Fear.

A few years later he guessed the meaning of his neighbors' sidewise gestures toward him at log-rollings, and the philosophy of askance glances of buxom merry maids at parties, after the "raisings" he frequently attended in company with his uncle.

"Unck! 'Ts a fine breezin' day, ain't it?"

"Yeop, boy!" Shortly spoken as they plow through the bushes.

"An' the bushes are talkin'—hear 'em?"

"Yeop, boy!" vigorously splashing.

"They do soun' like hungry horses, unck——"

"Aw, boy, shut up!" The old man beats on rapidly, but the quaint pattering voice follows him with awful persistency. Uncle though he be, the sweat starts oddly on his forehead.

"I kin hear 'em ridin'—lis'n!"

"You little devil!" cries the good man, fiercely, "the taint, it's in you! You are a little thief like yer father!" And he comes back in long strides till they halt under an oak with broad mystic branches.

"Ye-a-a," says the lad softly, "I s'pose I am."

"Boy," says the uncle, looking sadly into the thin, half-eager, half-sullen face, "they'll twisten y' by th' neck an' hang y' to a limb like that 'er' over y', jis liken they did your dad, an' God'll tie y' up in torment fur a million years."

"Ye-a-a?" comes the soft questioning acquiescence; "s'spose— they—will, lessen I kin git away—from 'em all 'n' God, too!"

It was curious that a common work horse excited within the boy an inexplicable longing wonder. It was his habit to stand before a horse, wrapt, intense, the muscles of his tawny black-brown face drawn, the veins on his throat puffing, his small nostrils quivering. In his mind the beast became transformed into a glorious, indescribable charger upon which he could go—go—to the ends of the earth—into the gates of the parson's paradise, about which he heard much.

It chanced one afternoon that the public shame of the new knowledge was burned into his mind in an equally unforgettable way. He had attended a "raising" as usual, and was amusing himself, after his custom, by drinking in the glories of a black mare belonging to his neighbor, Jerry Bowles, a hard-limbed, stone-headed pioneer of the infinitely suspicious and intolerant type. She was a velvety beauty—thoroughbred from tail-tip to dilated nostril; wild, passionate as a woman—a horse worth flying and dying for. The heat of the picture wore its way into the lad's brain. He did not see Jake creeping up behind him.

"Boy!" a terrible voice called out. "Commeer!"

He went, an aspen.

"Boy! y' are a little thief!——"



"Boy! y' are a little thief!"

He looked up oddly and oldly—an ancient light shot from his eyes. He became more than a child. He seemed a man pleading a desperate case, almost winning it against a prejudiced jury.

"It's bein' groun' inter me. I am seein' an' hearin'—I ain' sayin', but it's bein' hammered in. 'f I am a lit'le thief who's made me?"

A shrill laugh sounded behind the group—a sound like a squirrel chattering, execrable even though childish, and a voice cried out: "H'ray! H'ray! he'll be a good ol' horse thief an' I'll run a dozen knives through 'is dirty, filthy body, 'f he gits my colt!"

"Sid!—this ain' no place fur y'!

Go home! An' neighbors, I take it as hardly fair t' me," said the uncle. Being an old man he trembled; and the circle widened to let the boy run out into the woods—away from the rudely hewn framework of the little cottage cabin, away from the open, across the burned clearing full of leaves and green brush, into the thick woods.

"Sid—go home! 'tain' no place fur yuh!"

The boy went. Not crying at the catastrophe. It did not really matter, since he could calm the tumult within, and ride through the swamps—ride, ride, "like—his own father!"

"Mind! you'll be a goody, goody ole horse thief, an' I'll run a dozen

knives—" He lost the echo in the snapping underbrush, and great bitter tears swelled up in his eyes out of a bitter heart. Oh, rude training of a ruder generation! What desperate, uncouth lesson in crime was this? What adamant barrier to the right ultimate? What ineffable acceptance of the unutterable wrong—a finite road built infinitely, as it were, evilward, for the tottering feet of a boy!

The lad ran fiercely along the path that was hardly so much as a trail. Bushes bit at him, vines twined about his limbs. The Black Fever was upon him, and, as he ran, he saw, or seemed to see, a dark form trotting beside him. It appeared to allure him to mount and—

"I won't!" he shrieked back. "'F I wanted tuh nobody cud stop me! But I won'—won' do it! Dam' yuh all!"

He wailed hoarsely, he screamed, he threw himself into the tangled bush grass under the oak by Niles' Mark, and the tears fell incontinently. But It came. It came in spite of his wailing, surely, sapiently as the Old Serpent, creeping like a bank of fog. It enveloped him—inscrutably enclosed him. The long fingers clutched irresistibly. He went panting into Its pitchy bosom, and It wiped the tears from his eyes, the screams from his lips, as a nurse might wipe the bubbles from the mouth of a fretful babe. Thereafter he understood the meanings of things hidden before; knew with an ancient perception the cause of the ill-sustained gibes of lads, patronizing glances of men, icy tolerance of maids, and, moreover, it was disclosed to him in that hour the certainty with which the Fever would one day absorb him never to release.

He shivered. The sun was going down in the farthest swamp, and

twilight was thickening through all the glades; the frogs were singing under pale green logs along the edges of the Eight Mile. A rank mist, vicious with malarial enmity, crept in from the stagnant water, bunching itself against a distant flaring sky. Night quickened through all its sources. He could go home now. Obviously his fate was settled, his course was plain. There could be no escape for such as he. For his "family's sake"—potent shibboleth—the eternal "try" would be his; he would endure until manhood, ay longer, if there were need—and then—then—there would be an Afterwhile, brief at its longest, sweet with the heaven of inglorious Flight and Chase!

Such was the beginning of Sidney, son of Kern Hesh, called Jabe—Kern Jabez Hesh, horse-thief of upper Indiana, dead by the hands of his neighbors—dead fifty years ago, with a dozen knives rusting in the dust returned to dust.

An unpromising beginning, an unpromising progenitor, one would say. But Sid grew like a young thorn bush, rooted in imperial soil; strong, bold, handsome as a god. There was grip, resistance, in his fingers like that in the claws of a galley-rower; his arms were tough, withe-like; his limbs were firm with the good sappy current of an athletic, pioneering west. But his face!—who could read the meaning of that sensitive mouth, its corners' curb (a muscular contraction of dominant lips); the keen, flickering glitter of his eye? Had any one cared to try—mayhap there was one?—the effect would have been the same as one notes when peering out into a lippy, inscrutable sea, just as the sunshine of a fading day turns the spume and the intermin-

able rolling green into ineffable, dreamy, dazzling, mesmeric glory, the magnetism of a bold imperious spirit.

He worked, too; worked with the force of the forest tingling in his blood, boiling, fierce: life of leaves, of branches, of hundred-year-old trunks; life of panthers, bears, deer; life of burning sleet of winter; life of the blue spirit-noon of Indiana summer, were his life. There was none other at Bathe Corners who could swing an axe as Sid Hesh. And he knew the theory of growths better than botanist or naturalist—when corn, wheat, oats, barley should be planted; the effect of the moon upon the sowing and harvesting of grain. When the game fled west and north, he could follow them to their abiding places; the migration of birds and rodents, the subtle passage of black ants, the virulence of creeping things—of all woods life he was aware. The topography of forests and marshes was an open book to him. And, indeed, for these various accomplishments he received a desultory praise from his neighbors who, nevertheless, could not forget the sorrow in his blood—and did not care to do so.

To Sid this neglect mattered nothing. The burden of his secretest thoughts clung somewhere in the meshes of this barbaric yawp which he had improvised:

"I don't care fur sun-fire,
An' my love don' care fur rain;
'N' we both don' care fur th' dark
ol' swamps—
Givus a horse an' rein;
Givus a horse 'ith legs like steel,
An' his belly fat 'ith hay:
'N' we'll ride through the whole of
th' dismal swamps,
An' chase our souls away!"

Strangely enough there was one to whom he dared repeat this song,

softened a little by the inspiration of the moment.

"Don' y', Sid," said the one who listened, shrinking at the words. "Don' y'! 'f brother Jerr heerd y' say that he'd—he'd——"

"Say it out, Nan," interrupted Sid, bitterly. "Don' hold on my 'count. Plain speakin' 's good as doin'. They'd hang me—ain' that it? 'Ith a dozen knives in me cause dad was a horse-thief?"

It was the natural sequence. Nancy Bowles could not deny it, so she leaned back in the long damp shadows of the beech clump which was their trysting place, and looked up into the man's eyes with doubtful sadness. Under her low Clytie brow great blue eyes beaconed out that glorified her plain face and prim figure, and these eyes were guarded by lashes that had a knack of quivering in a way sadder than the tears they hid.

"Ye-a-a, Sid," with dumb hopefulness. "They jist won' believe yuh noways."

"Nuther do you. W'y yuh are 'fraid yourself. Lookie! yuh wouldn't even——"

Deadly glitter! The girl looked around apprehensively—then she flung herself into his arms to shiver there under the fierce pressure of his kisses. The magnetism of the deep woods was upon her. When one travels for days through limitless trails of bushes and tree-tracts, there comes over the soul an aimless, penetrating longing, mixed with strange dreams, weird suggestions of confusing presences, fantastic immeasurable desires: to those who heed and hearken follows a palsied, mysterious relaxation of struggling will, nerve, muscle, and the relentless Power is upon them. The attraction that drew and held the girl to Sid was something of the same.

"Don' yuh, Sid," she panted. "Lemme go! Oh!"

He tossed her back like a leaf, exultantly; then spoke in measured cadence and as if addressing some unseen foe.

"An' when I say 'come' she'll fol-ler like a charmed bird!" He rocked her gently against his breast.

The girl listened fearsomely, accepting the words as true, having no pity for herself nor remorse. Pioneer life in the woods is not conducive to introspection on the part of one who fights hunger and cold twenty-four hours each day.

Sid watched her curiously through the heavy dark; the trend of her secretest thoughts as plain to him as the wind of the Rattlesnake Lair where the lures were set through the long dumb moonlight nights. He was a son of his father.

"I'm goin', Nan. The' ain' no use stayin' with a deaf heartless girl like yuh. Y' don' love! 'f I 's a girl I'd—" Cunning deception of man since the beginning.

She pressed closer to him. Brief bliss born of misery overtook her.

"There, there!" the man indifferently concluded, "le's talk a minute. Yuh call t' min' th' beauty of yer brother Jerr's black mare?"

The picture of an ague-bitten, pinched, squirrel-voiced man impressed itself upon her fiery brain—and a dark thoroughbred. She thought, too, of that man's wife, ill with the pangs of new life wearing her away. Her brother's home, her own.

"Purty?" asked Sid. "Ride like a b'loon basket?"

She whimpered.

"Don' yuh," she begged, "talk anything but that." Desperately—"Talk love—but let horses alone."

Sid laughed his old sad guttural. "You're liken 'em all," he answered.

"I ain', Sid. Deed, Gawd knows I ain'. I've loved yuh mor'n heart kin tell, an' I've worked my fingers t' bone t' keep from a-cryin' out loud fer y'. Day an' night I've bit my lips till th' blood run t' keep from showin' every one my love 'n' shame. What kin I say more? Yuh got me"—so plaintively, like the sorrow of a nesting bird, grieving through lone twilights—"yuh got me, an' y' don' care how I'm a-lovin' yo-u. I'm afraid, yuh say—well, don' I know fur sure the time will come when th' can't be hidin' no more, 'n' when y've got to go like yer dad?"

"An' Jerry Bowles'll stick a dozen knives in my dirty carcass?" He laughed rudely at the speech which she was pouring out with every throb of her heart. Then, suddenly, as if to give the lie to all unmanliness and banish it forever, he said: "An' suppos'n I buy a piece of land off th' Reservation, an' build a house there with real glass winders, an' drive t' Wayne fer a load of tables an' stuff? Suppos'n I buy a reel cookin' grate?"

"Oh, Sid, if y' only would!" What pleading, pathetic heaven she put into that one sentence. No art can reproduce it. The words alone are cold and bare. Sid Hesh was more visibly moved by them, however, than by all her passion.

"Nan, that's it. That's th' whole truth. 'N' I'm goin' t' buy th' land to-morry—there—*there*—little un."

But he had forgotten the point of circumstance, the play of destiny, and for once the Black Fever.

Bathe Corners was a typical "cross roads" Indiana town of a quarter of a century ago. There was discouragingly little of it besides name and "cross roads," for forests and weeds seemed to swallow it up faster than

the most enterprising could build it. A half dozen log cabins, an old board "shack," with an intoxicatingly lettered sign — "Grocery, Dry Goods, Whiskey" — two or three rudimentary streets ending in woods, paths or rude wagon ways; a couple of dozen lean pigs, rooting happily in those disreputable streets, summed the hamlet where the Eight Mile farmers occasionally resorted for such meager stores as they deemed necessary, trading their "produce" and carrying away, among other things, the time-honored black jug.

During the day perpetual peace brooded over Bathe. It was only in the evening that the men gathered in front of the store in summer, or around the general stove in the winter, spun yarns of the loggings, and swore great oaths with hardy fearlessness. Such tales! No grim Brom Bones could compare with the Wisp stories of our early frontier. And there was a spice of truth in most of them—a foundation at least—the rest built from air, for the woods is a good place in which to grow superstition. Who but can remember the illusive wake of fox-

fire, luring men to death in pits no human hand had dug? Did not Tom Gaylord die the death in Shanken's Pond? Could not they hear, even ten years later, his terrified screams as an invisible Power



"An' supposin' I build a house with real glass winders."

sucked him down in the darkness?

It was a very good place to sit and smoke, there on the porch of the favorite grocery. Jerry Bowles liked it passing well. The company was to his taste. Being a great story-

teller, he always had audience and the sort of following grateful to his thirsty liking. He was fond of a particular bench that jutted out to the south, giving him an opportunity to look down the "west road" in the direction of his "place."

It chanced that he sat in this very spot, his basket full of sugar, tea, coffee, and some new linen that his sick wife had instructed him to bring without fail, on a particular night, drawing out the denouement of a peculiarly interesting story. A strong moonlight burned along the line of road, throwing broad streams of light over the fantastically irregular way, turning skirting trees into Druidical pretenders, and cutting the dark recesses, into which the trail wound, with long level passages of misty, shining sheen. Suddenly he was interrupted. A man turned uneasily in his seat.

"Kinder late fur any one to be ridin' from th' west," he said. They listened intently. The throb of a horse pricking cavalierly over an uncertain road aroused them all. Then on a sudden an ague-bitten, chattering fellow was seized with a chill more terrible than any ague.

"It's my Jess, boys!" cried Jerry, leaping up. "Jess comin' through th' woods, an' she's rode—she's rode."

A black shadow flitted out into the most distant patch of moonlight and moved down upon them breathlessly.

"She's rode!" repeated Jerry Bowles. "It's my Jess, an' Sid Hesh is a ridin' of her! Shoot high, men—don' hit the horse! Aim high!" He had drawn his revolver.

"Halt! Halt!"

"Jerry Bowles!" called a clear metallic voice, "yer wife is at th' dyin' point!"

"Yuh lie! *Shoot the horse-thief!*"

A quick sputtering streak of fire broke out from the edges of the "shack." He had come and gone. After him followed the sudden roll of a dozen horses plunging behind as he sped toward Butte.

"Jerry Bowles! will yuh lis'n to reason an' providence?" Sid's voice went echoing back. The only reply was a purple flash against the ridges of trees, and the ugly gurgle of bullets. Sid began to forget the meaning of the ride.

From Bathe Corners to Butte, county seat of Wells, it was ten miles of the rudest road man ever built; north to Wayne City from Bathe, it was fifteen of execrable mud and corduroy, with trees lopping overhead and bushes whipping out every ten steps. From Butte to Wayne City by the nearest roundabout way, avoiding Bathe, it was considerably more than thirty miles, and the road was only "blazed"—indicated by "blazes" or notches on trees—for the most part. The Eight Mile Creek unbridged, except near Bathe, was dangerously fordable. So it will appear that in those days a man riding for life to Butte, failing upon his errand there, and turning to Wayne, would have ten miles back to Bathe, and fifteen further to the city. Moreover, if the need were for life that upon the return he should go around Bathe Corners, he would have more than thirty miles of the poorest path one can conceive.

It was to this ride of more than forty miles that Sid Hesh found himself forced by the exigency of a play of destiny that put his enemy into his own hand and ended the question of favor effectually and forever.

West of the town one mile, as we have said, lay Jerry Bowles' eighty acres, where, in complicated amity,

he and his wife lived with mother and sister. His nearest neighbor was Kalish Hesh, a quarter of a mile through the scrub. It chanced, then, that when young Mrs. Bowles fell ill, suddenly and seriously, with Jerry at Bathe Corners, buying provender and white goods, the nearest place for help was Hesh's homestead, to which the elder Mrs. Bowles ran; Nancy, the usual errand girl being away at the time.

Sid Hesh was lying in front of his uncle's fire-place when the imperative summons came—a breathless call at the door, a resounding, "Neighbor! Neighbor!" He sprang up to greet Mrs. Bowles who was white with fright.

"She's been took!" the good lady cried, wringing her hands. "She's took suddint, 'n' Jerr's away 't Bathe Corners! She'll die shore 'f the 'ain' a doctor!" The general statement was sufficient.

"Landy!" wondered old Mrs. Hesh. "I'll git ready an' go right over. Jane," to Sid's mother, "you go, too, an' take th' barks—they's powerful remedious in quick cases! Sidney, saddle Dolly an' ride to Bathe fer Jerr!"

"Dolly's dead lame," Sid replied with a shiver. He did not look up. "I kin walk t' Bathe fur Jerr; he kin come back an' saddle Jess an' ride to Butte."

He was stumbling on the bridge of Mirza; there were pitfalls everywhere.

"She'll shorely die," wailed Mrs. Bowles. "Every minute puts a nail in her coffin. She does suffer *so* higeously."

Sid's mother looked long and earnestly into her son's face. They were both thinking at once—and, oh, belief and loyalty of a mother's heart, she understood, was not afraid.

"Saddle Jess," quietly, as if this were saying a little thing. In those days such a command touching another's property was fraught with grave responsibility; in this particular instance the danger was poignant and plain to her. "Saddle Jess an' ketch Jerr at Bathe!"

"Ay, what would Jerr Bowles say when he saw *me* on Jess. He'd shoot me 'fore I could motion. Mother you know," pathetically, "he'd shoot me without a word!"

"She'll shorely die!" Mrs. Bowles was repeating like an automaton.

"'N' you yourself wouldn' trus' *me*, Mis' Bowles."

"She'll shorely die!"

"Mother, it ain' safe!"

"She'll shorely die!"

"Mother, it is *my* life fur——"

"*She'll—shorely—die!*"

The glare began to come into Sid's eye.

"Mother," hoarsely, "I daren't. He'd shoot th' life out of me!" But as he said it, he knew that he was more afraid of himself than of the bullets of Jerry Bowles' pistol.

Jane Hesh did a thing uncommon in those times among the rude forefathers of our mighty west. She put her arms about the lad's neck, and kissed him, then whispered a moment in his ear. The die was cast. What matter? "He won't believe!" What matter? "He'll shoot th' life out of me!" What matter? The answer was like solemn music—the only reply a man could make.

A quick run through the pitchy dark, the vaulting of a barnyard fence, a whinney, snort, scuffle, a rattle of bridle, the grip of a tight saddle, and Sid rode from the stable, took the high fence—a dangerous attempt—and galloped down the lane to the "blazed" road that led to Bathe. It was darker than he

wished. He noted his unfavorable chances methodically.

"'F I go by Bathe," he said aloud, "I'll have every man after me. 'F I go through the woods an' dodge it'll take two hours longer an' most like I'll lose control o' th' horse."

He stopped stock still.

"Mother didn' know their hate of me! Why should I go?"

A low cry rang through the distance. He knew it was no sound of brute misery. It came again, floating hopelessly through the trees.

"Jess, ol' girl, we've got to travel; an' if it's th' Afterwhile, God'll have to fix it 'cordin'."

He pulled up once more. The sound was long drawn and exceedingly faint with distance. But it was the cry of a woman in deathly pain, ringing through the lonesome woods. And he understood. With a vicious jerk he brought the mare's head up and fled like a dark shadow, himself silent as the desolate country. And slowly the Vision came upon him as he sat the rocking horse. At Bathe, as we have seen, he met the taste of fight and the fringe of Chase swung in behind him as he hurried toward Butte. But the pity and the woe of it all was the desperate struggle to remember as he dashed through the vague moonshine. And you will see that Sid, clearheaded, had the discouraging nine chances to lose with those twelve resolute men well-mounted and sparing nothing of whip and spur, and that Sid trying to remember had not even one. Still it was glorious. The Flight was on—the honied, drunken, terrible Flight of the Death Ride. And the Afterwhile seemed sweeter in that hour than the love of any woman under the sun. He jabbed Jess cruelly with a rusty spur. Unused to the

pain, the mare leaped along, frothingly angry, under the stolidly insistent half-light, and the miles stretched away like dim dreams.

But the Black Fever, at this juncture, seething ingloriously through the man's blood, had failed to reckon upon the subconsciousness that plays in the brain after reason and intent have burned to insane flame. When logic is dead, the heart running like mad, the will paralyzed, this undercurrent, bidding its time till then, subserves its purpose.

Butte was reached by an imperious rider who thrashed through the streets like a centaur. He dashed up to Dr. Harkess' residence.

"Ho, Dock! Dock!" No answer. "Dock!"

"Doctor out on an all-night case," a plaintive voice made sleepy answer through a tight lattice.

"Anybody else docterin here?"

There did not seem to be.

"No; Dr. Bellmont left. Malaria knocked him." The woman's voice chuckled proudly and increased in volume as if to indicate her knowledge of one doctor, however, who had withstood the chill of fever and won a weaker brother's practice.

Sid turned away with a groan. By the scant light he saw how his intolerant riding had put Jess in a perilous lather. And he knew that he dared not go back to meet that foaming posse headed by a desperate enemy who was cursing his soul at every step.

"South through Butte into the wilderness," urged the Black Fever.

"North by the roundabout to Wayne for another doctor, thence home slowly," strenuously replied subconsciousness. It was a death toss, but the undercurrent of life won.

Sid turned his horse east and



“Mother, it is my life fur —”

loped out into the swallowing blackness just as a thunder of hoofs rattled into Butte from the north.

Butte well understood the meaning of this rumble. Five months before it had answered a similar reverberation. Then it was that a thief rode east to the Cold Retreat and slunk five days in the swamp before they dragged him forth and swung him on the top limb of a water-beech, his miserable body full of lead. The crowd gathered quickly to the summons.

"God A'mighty!" chattered Jerry. "Yuh stan' like fools! Where's him gone? Th' slim man on a black! My black!" He swore incontinently.

"Gone east not five minutes ago," some one shouted.

"The roundabout!" shrieked Jerry, "to the Cold Retreat. Come on, boys!" And the thunder muttered eastward in galloping cadence.

A wind had come spanking in from the east, therefore the noise of the chase faded westward; Sid pulled Jess gently down to rest her. He had been riding an hour and a half over a killing road. The swamp and creek were to ford and the long end of the flight was ahead.

Now a fifty-mile ride on the back of a good horse is no great performance, providing the course is good, the way sunlit, and no hurrying terror behind. But a black trail under a slow moon with hell snapping at one's heels is another thing. Added to this the taint speaking in each heart-beat, and you have a picture of unhappy despair hard pressed, with Death a close pursuer.

The moon was riding high when Jess struck the swamp and wallowed through the mire to the center, then dropped, snorting, into the apparently bottomless lake. The cold eddies crept up to her head and she floundered desperately. A wise

horse properly trained, however, is never frightened until hope is gone. Sid thanked his alien gods that the mare took the black water easily, if not eagerly, but he ground his teeth at the time they lost in the crossing, for as they struck sod once more he heard the chilling cry behind, and knew his close followers. Again within his tense veins the blood leapt and the Fever grew. It was a fearful moment. Reason forsook him utterly.

"Come death!—death anyway!— anyway!" he yelled. And, in reply, again the purple line of fire broke out sputtering from the further edge of the swamp. And again he jabbed the rowel into the mare's sides blood deep. The thoroughbred entered the last stretch without a waver, the blood dripping, dripping from her wounded side.

"For," reasoned the subconsciousness, "a dying woman awaits a physician, one mile west of Bathe Corners!"

A party of blood-thirsty men, astride reeling horses flecked with bloody foam, overtook a man walking slowly south out of Wayne. He was leading a black, dejected, limping mare, and, with the bridle under his arm, he looked not unlike Napoleon returning alone to Waterloo after the battle.

They flung themselves from their horses and were upon Sid in an instant. He did not lift his arms, did not signal. They might easily have shot him, for he made no attempt to protect himself.

"Y'll have it so. Yuh have allus believed it, an' y' won' believe nothin' else. Hang, an' be done with it. Hang with less of a trial than you cutthroats gave my dad afore me!" He spoke roughly as they circled round him.

"String him up!" vociferated Bowles. "No water-beech fur this devil. He's ruined Jess."

"Jess is ruined," chimed in others. The plight of the mare maddened them.

"Ye a-a," from their victim, bitterly. "Drive a stake an' kin'le a fire, an' go home t' yer dead——"

"Liar!" the red of a closely fired pistol, and the horse thief's son went down in the tough grass.

"Wait Jerr. Le's hear what he has to say. Le's give him a trial, anyhow," rebuked one of the men.

They swung back into a wider circle and held Jerry's pistol down. Backwoodsmen pride themselves upon their justice. Upon this occasion there must be no irregularity. There was moon enough to read their law, the sections whereof were brief as the passing of a hard-pressed deer.

"Now tell on!" A sharp order.

"Hang on an' be cursed!" firmly spoken. "Ye've plastered a hole in my ribs—finish th' job!"

"He's guilty! Stick him! Shoot him! Tromp him! Grapevine him!"

They doubled in two steps or so. Sid raised on his elbow.

"Don' fergit th' dozen knives. I ain' rode fifty miles to save a woman's life!"

Some one hit him savagely, and his mouth tasted salt. A burning blister was boring into his side; and he grew tired suddenly—very tired! He no longer heard the insulting jibes that broke upon him; he no more remembered his bitter childhood. Above him a dimming Diana ran her fairy-like rays through a mass of fleecy clouds, building them into snowy, grotesque domes that were like floating, changeable, frothy mountain tops. And there was silence for a little while.

Meantime the crowd broke through

the bushes to search for a wild vine strong enough for their purpose. Some came forth presently from the rank woods, dragging a network of arm-thick grapevine. Others built a little fire of sticks and brush that the gruesome affair might be well lighted. And the flames leapt up garishly, setting off a grim background of trees over which the round, hopeless moon hung. To the front, under the spreading limbs of an oak, a rude posse of men stood, inexorably determined, their shadows doing devil-dances in the flaring light.

"Jake Rinewold, I move you be actin' chairman an' judge," said one of the men solemnly. His voice broke the silence audibly. In rapid ferocity Rinewold was voted in by acclaim. A thin man with heavy beard and placid brow that gave the lie to every other feature, moved out. Rinewold understood his duty, and the others fell back mechanically.

"Sid Hesh!—hyar, yuh men, kick him out of that faint! Sid Hesh, y' know th' charge. Guilty or not guilty?"

"Not guilty, by th' Lord! an' I've opened m' head fur th' last! Hang on!"

At this point in Road Court, evidence is taken tacitly. In this case, however, none was offered.

"Job Bushee, yuh kin count th' minutes. Give him fifteen!"

Bowles was dissatisfied with fifteen—ten were too many, he thought, but the judge overruled. Bushee stood stolidly aside, glancing up at the light. He had read minutes before, and could guess within seconds of the exact time.

Meanwhile Sid was bound, the looped vine adjusted, and he stood supported by two men, under the tree to which he was to be "strung."

His face was very pale now, for the Fever had deserted him and only relentless anger at the deep damnation of his neighbor's injustice filled him.

"Five minutes gone!"

He listened with dumb carelessness, cognizant, indifferent. As the blaze flamed up to show his high cheek bones whitening under the tension, he gave no sign. His eyes were not blinded, nor was his mouth gagged. He could weep, speak—he was expected to grow garrulous; his father had done so before him—and therein lay the sport of the Chase.

"Ten minutes gone!"

The doomed man looked inward. There he heard the song of birds, voice of woods and water, knew his trails, counted his summer again, saw his Mother's face, and the face of the other for whom he had promised to buy a home 'to-morry.' He broke into a hoarse chuckle. He loved her—the chuckle was like tears; therefore it killed the Fever forever—put out the fire—and the Chase was at its end. The Mystery finished!

"Eleven!—twelve!"

There grew out of the darkness of the south road a sudden clicking, rapid, like the clanking guttural of pulley-chains rasping on corduroy. Those who heard it glanced in that direction apprehensively, for they were aware that it foretold the galloping of a horse unchecked by bit.

"Thirteen!" Some stern spirit tightened the vine rope.

The sound mingled with a faint

cry—now a scream, and from a woman's lips.

"Fourteen!" The vine twisted powerfully and life began to gurgle in Sid's throat.

But the thunder was fearfully apparent. The magnetism had held.

"Hold! hold!—oh, you devils of men!"

The body was swinging against the flickering light and beckoning to the solemn, graying sky, as a bonny bay horse, lathered and trembling, with a slip of a girl clinging to his back, shivered through the crowd and dashed it apart. The rider leapt like a panther into their midst, and flung a folded square of paper at Rinewold.

The body swung no more.

"Oh, Sid! Sid!"

Solicitously the men removed her from her lover's arms. She clawed them viciously, and bent yet lower over the man who had won.

"Midnight: Foolish men. Mrs. Bowles safely delivered. Boy.

"Dr. Banyan,

"Wayne."

Gray dawn had dimmed the moon and driven her far down into the west, when the posse, traveling slowly, reached Bathe Center.

"An' Sid, y' know y' promised!" A plaintive voice, tremulous with hope, spoke out of the mist that came creeping up.

"Ay, Nan, an' I'll buy th' lan' to-morry," he answered, weakly but determinedly.

Jerry Bowles seemed not to hear; the other men were thinking.

The Wing of Recompense

BY Julie M. Lippmann.



"Of course you'll do it, Geoffrey! If you hadn't already 'arrived' I'll be blest if I wouldn't feel like saying it was the chance of your life. I'm not so sure, as it is, that you aren't a subject for special congratulation. As the artist who painted Lady Frankfield's portrait you'll have the deuce of a boom."

To emphasize the sincerity of his feeling Tom Mieckleham gave his friend a sounding slap upon the shoulder and then turned and paced up and down the length of the studio with giant strides and *sotto voce* grunts of satisfaction.

Geoffrey recovered from the blow in marvelously quick time, considering its force, and thrust his crossed feet out upon the floor before him with a yawn of indifference.

"Perhaps," he admitted. "But, you see, I don't want to be boomed. And if I hadn't 'arrived' (though I do say it as shouldn't) Lady Frankfield probably wouldn't be giving me her pic'y to paint at all, at all. You see, Tom, old man, these dear little dames aren't so ingenuous as one sometimes gives 'em credit for being. And Lady Frankfield is an American: she knows the value of money—and other things: at least she thinks she does. Americans have a great idea of *value*; and the worst of it is, they clap it on the wrong things. I'm an American myself and I know the breed."

Tom Mieckleham halted long enough to say, "Don't be hard on thine own people, dear boy," and then resumed his heavy-footed patrol.

"Hard, am I? Well, if I'm occasionally hard on them it's only because I'm continually soft on them. But I see things as they are, and our national commercialism grinds me. So little is done nowadays for sentiment. It's all barter and exchange. Our men buy their fortunes at the expense of their self-respect, and our women sell themselves for a title. Money and position—that's all it is we think of to-day. Look at Lady Frankfield, for instance. It's a well-known fact that she sacrificed everything a woman is presumed to care about for the sake of being a countess. She——"

"Hold on! Hold on!" shouted Mieckleham hoarsely. "I'd better tell you right here that Frankfield's my cousin. Besides—that's false!"

Geoffrey caught himself up with a quick gasp.

"Oh, I *beg* pardon!" he apologized with instant remorse and a genuine sincerity. "The truth of it is I'm a little *hipped* on the subject, I suppose. My own conception of the valuable in life may not be better, but, at least, it's different. Such as it is, I inherit it from my great-grandfather, I suppose, who in the palmy old days of love and war, got himself disliked for marrying the wrong girl, because he loved her, and fighting for a forlorn hope

because he believed in it, and was generally chivalrous and—a—blooming ass. I have his portrait tucked away here somewhere. I'll show it to you. Here it is now. Isn't he a fine old chap? I copied him from an old miniature that belonged to my father. When I was a little shaver I used to have a great feeling for the old duffer. Thought him a hero and all that, for setting up his own standards and sticking to them when he knew that if he did his father would divert the estates from him and transfer them to his younger brother. I used to think him a kind of Bayard. After all, there was something fine about the fellows in mediaeval days: the ones who made their own code of conduct, and ground their own paints, and chiseled their own marble, and built their own fiddles. I'll be blest if I don't think it paid them in the long run. At least their honor and their colors and their statues and their music lasted longer than ours will, I'm afraid. They went slower than we do, so that occasionally 'the wing of recompense' could overtake them."

"I say," broke in Mieckleham with a good-natured grin, "come back, come back! It's a long call from our little American countess to your knights of old, and I must be off. So say you'll accept the job and I'll drop in at Lady Frank's on my way on, and let her know how the cat has jumped. Then, after that, it will be easy enough to settle for sittings. Is it yes or—" he could not bring himself to say "no." Instead, he stopped in his heavy tramp and stood looking down at Geoffrey, where he sat, with a queer expression of anxious, shy affection in his big, florid face.

Geoffrey got to his feet with a

spring and gave Mieckleham's great fist a hearty hand-grip.

"What a rattling good fellow you are, Tom," he cried, as the other shook himself free of his clasp and began rummaging about the vicinity for his hat and stick and gloves. "A regular trump. Do you suppose I don't know who has been blowing my horn to Lady Frankfield and the rest? You said a little while ago (and I admitted for the sake of argument) that I had *arrived*. Well, so I have in a modest way; but only in an artistic sense and up to a certain point. I'm doing work which one or two men, whose opinions I prize, are pleased to say is good. But it takes more than a picture or two on the line and a paragraph in the papers to fill one's pockets and make up for the years of pennilessness in Paris, when one didn't know where the next mouthful was coming from nor how one was going to square it with the landlord. That time isn't so far off, Mieckleham, but that I can recall it with tolerable distinctness and I know—and *you* know—that what I've done in between times hasn't been enough to set me afloat financially, by any means. And it's because you do know it that you're going about puffing me to your smart friends and inciting your frisky matrons to sit to me.

"All I've got to say is, I'm no end grateful and that I'll paint your Lady Frank in my very best style and thank you for the chance. I don't want to be boomed, as I said before. All I ask is a fair fighting chance and I've learned to my cost how hard it is to get it. I only want to hold my own—and nothing but my own. But there are times in one's life when one finds one can't even hold one's own—because it's been grabbed by some other fellow."

Mieckleham looked at him with wide eyes of astonishment. Geoffrey had never talked in this strain to him before and for the first time he realized that behind his easy, debonaire assumption of indifference and calm was a hot, feverish, ever-present sense of his own struggles and the memory of recent panic-stricken seasons when life seemed to be closing every door to him and the only one death opened yawned dark.

In Mieckleham's own easy, favored existence there had been no such moments as these, but a man of the world sees many phases of life that are outside his own, or if they touch it touch it obliquely, and what Geoffrey had revealed was like the letting down of a curtain to him.

His face grew hot and deeply flushed and he looked at the ground with bashful awkwardness. "I—say, my boy," he stammered appealingly.

"That's all right," Geoffrey assured him, with recovered composure, and in a flash the atmosphere was clear and the two men on their former footing of easy, irresponsible, good-comradeship again.

"Then I can tell Lady Frank that she may write to you for an appointment?" Mieckleham asked.

"O, yes," returned the artist with a quizzical smile. "You may tell her."

"Then by-by, old man."

"So long, Tom."

Lady Frankfield wrote and Geoffrey answered.

He had never striven over a piece of work in his life as he strove over this one. He put his whole heart into it, gave it the full measure of his vigorous genius, and all the time he told himself that he was doing it for Tom's sake. Over and above his natural and inevitable wish to do his

best for his art's sake he felt an incessant, inward urging to achieve something notable as repayment for Mieckleham's faith in him.

In Lady Frankfield he had a subject after his own heart and he made the most of every suggestion in her high-bred, sensitive face; every line in her noble figure and every fold in her simple drapery. The composition was a masterpiece.

"O, I say!" shouted Mieckleham, bursting in upon him in an uncontrollable fever of enthusiasm one day, "this is a regular walkover. As you say over there in the States, it's 'dead easy.' They're going to have to put up a sign before Lady Frank's portrait at the Academy, 'Follow the crowd and keep moving!' else the rest of the show will simply be ignored. You have no idea—but, pshaw! you can't help knowing what a tremendous hit you've made. Come, cheer up, Geoffrey! By the gods, man, don't look so glum when, in the words of that Monte Cristo chap, 'the world is yours.'"

Geoffrey hitched himself out of his chair with an impatient laugh and began pacing the floor nervously. "Oh, the world is mine, is it?" he retorted gruffly. "Well, that's all you know about it, Tom."

"Why, what's up? what's up?" demanded Mieckleham, his large cheerfulness suffering a momentary check, and then reasserting itself radiantly. "Don't be sorrowful, darling. It'll all come out in the wash, and after all, as far I can see, you've nothing to worry about now but the question of over which ear you're going to wear your laurels. Come, brace up, and I'll tell you what ails you. You've been dabbling too steadily at those confounded old canvasses of yours and now the strain of Lady Frank's is over and

the tension relaxed, you're fraying out at the loose ends."

"Come, let's take a tramp," suggested Geoffrey abruptly, reaching for his hat and emptying his half-smoked pipe upon the floor.

"Very well," consented Mieckleham, "and we might drop in at Lady Frank's on our way. She was complaining—well, not complaining exactly, but *saying* that you hadn't been to call on her and that since she had stopped sitting she hadn't seen you. I dare say you haven't intended it, but don't you think that's a little cavalier? And when a woman's so altogether charming as Lady Frank it's inexcusable."

Geoffrey laughed. "I'm leaving you to do the gallant, Mieckleham," he said shortly. "You're amply qualified for the pair of us. And to tell the truth, I've been hanging over that portrait so long that I'm rather glad of a rest from it and——"

"And the original?" suggested Mieckleham.

"I didn't say that," returned Geoffrey gravely.

"Better not—to me," recommended Tom with amiable seriousness.

The two men went out into the street together and it was only when they had reached the pavement and were swinging into a rapid, even stride that Geoffrey took up the subject again and pursued it with the question: "Why?"

"'Why'?—What?" repeated Mieckleham.

"Why would I better not say it—to you?"

Mieckleham cast about in his mind for a clue.

"Oh—you mean—Now I've got it! Why, only because I'm her friend, don't you know. I'm yours too, for the matter of that. I don't want either of you to go foul of the

other. That's natural, isn't it?"

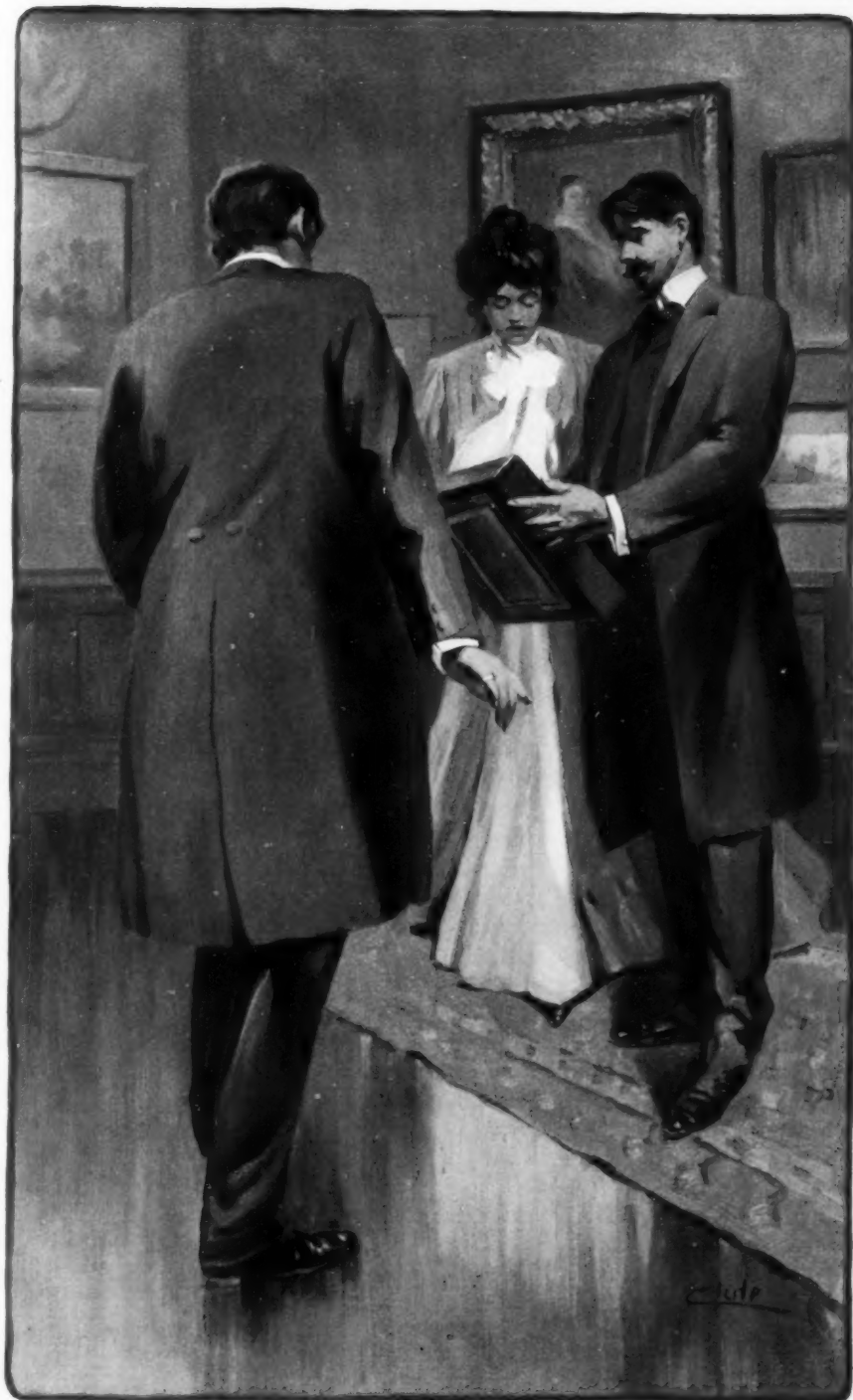
Geoffrey flung back his head and laughed. "I wonder," he broke in sharply, "whether you're enough her friend to care—to care——"

"Eh—well?"

"Oh, hang it!"

"You mean," supplied Mieckleham quietly and with a sudden, new-found dignity, "am I enough her friend to care that people say I—go there too much? But tell me this, will you, why shouldn't I go there? Frankfield's my cousin—worse luck! And his wife was my friend before he married her. I knew her before he did. I met her when she first came to London and I lov—liked her then. It was I took Hubert to call on her. But I'll own to you that if I'd known how things would go I'd have seen him hanged first. Yes, I'm enough her friend for—anything. Enough to care that he's a cursed cad whom any other woman would have flung out on the street long ago and who's leading her a dog's life, enough to care that she's eating her heart out with the misery of it and enough to mind not a three-penny bit for all the gabble of all the gossips in London if I can make an hour or so out of her day seem less like perdition to her. And the worst of it is," he broke off whimsically, "I can't even have the satisfaction of wishing Frankfield dead and out of her way, for if he should die I'd come in for the title, since there's no boy to inherit it direct. Now you know."

The two tramped on in silence. But Mieckleham's face was very pale and Geoffrey's eyes were dark and troubled. Not another word was spoken, and when Tom turned in and mounted Lady Frankfield's steps his companion followed in silence.



“ ‘But I don’t understand,’ insisted Lady Frankfield.”

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She did not keep them waiting, but hurried down to them as soon as they had been announced. She greeted both men cordially, Geoffrey with faint surprise, and Mieckleham with the flattering unceremoniousness that one uses only with those who are dear. In her presence Tom regained his momentarily lost spirits, and Geoffrey, too, tried to be himself and to throw off the strange, throat-clutching misery which had fastened upon him for the last few months and which he had not dared to understand.

Lady Frankfield's face was flushed and animated. Her eyes shone and her lips kept trembling into smiles in spite of herself, it would seem. Geoffrey recalled Tom's description of her life with Frankfield and felt that, if it were true, there must certainly be compensations for her in some other direction, else she could never radiate joyousness like this.

"It's Mieckleham himself," he thought, with a stifling contraction of the heart.

Meanwhile Mieckleham was regarding her with a sort of wonder in his frank blue eyes; but he fell into her mood with the heartiest acquiescence and Geoffrey felt strangely shut out and estranged from them both, now that they were together, when with either of them alone he would have believed himself to be at ease. He had never known a moment's embarrassment with Mieckleham—until of late: and with Lady Frankfield—

He looked up suddenly just in time to catch a telegraphic exchange of glances between them. His eyes fell at once and he flushed guiltily, as if he had been detected in an error.

"Oh, Tom," spoke up Lady Frankfield quickly, "let us show Mr. Yorke the gallery. I'm sure we

have been boring him unpardonably with our chatter, and he will find the pictures much more amusing. Come!"

She rose and led the way down a dim corridor, up a flight of wide, softly carpeted stairs, and again along a winding passage, into a place whose walls were hung with tapestries, and, as far as Geoffrey could see, a rather mediocre show of painted canvasses in pretentious gilt frames.

Lady Frankfield looked up into his face with a quizzical little twinkle in the corners of her eyes, as she said whimsically: "As it's all in the family—confess you're disappointed. You had expected your portrait of me would keep company with a host of Gainsboroughs and Reynolds and Lelys, hadn't you? Well, I'm sure, as a family, we'd have been glad to have it so. But, you see, we are quite new people, and before we got our title we were very simple folk indeed. See, this is our first Lord—and you can judge for yourself how recent he is. It makes one quite blush for shame. Hubert, my husband, is only the fourth who has borne the title, and he——"

"But what I want," broke in Mieckleham, coming toward them from across the room, "is to have Geoffrey pass judgment on 'the mystery.' We have a 'mystery' here, Geoffrey. And we think, if it's properly handled, we can make a very fair sort of ghost of it. Allow me to conduct you to the Mystery."

He directed him to a rather shadowy corner of the other wall where a small insignificant canvas hung. The frame, from its fashion and hue, seemed to antedate the portrait by many years, but whereas the frame was in good condition, the portrait itself presented a singular appearance of decay.

The face was almost indiscernible. The colors had faded and the entire surface of the canvas was clouded and streaked and indistinct. And yet there was something there—something it was impossible to fix upon—which held one's eyes and made one long to look again.

"It is the portrait of Hubert's father," explained Lady Frankfield, "and it cannot have been done more than forty years or so ago, but you see how it is being destroyed. Perhaps you will restore it for us. Can you, do you think?"

She was aware in a moment that she had made a blunder, that her request was presumptuous, that it might easily give offence; but Geoffrey, looking down at her kindly, reassured her by replying at once: "If you wish it—I will try."

"There was once another picture in that frame," she broke in hastily, to hide her embarrassment, and thanking him with her eyes, "but it disappeared. It was the portrait of the eldest son of the first Lord Frankfield. He was not Lord Frankfield then. The eldest son and his father had a great quarrel and he was disinherited. He went away—to America, I think, and was never heard of any more. But after he had gone and the title came into the family, his father repented of his threat to divert the estates away from him and transfer them to his younger brother, and let his will remain as it was, meaning to have the title and all descend to him or his heirs, if ever they should come back to claim it. None of them ever has come back, so Hubert (who is the descendant of the younger branch) is the last direct heir. But I started out to say that this frame was once about the portrait of the eldest son. One day the picture disappeared—and it was too bad,

for it happened to be the only thing in the way of a likeness in existence that would be of use in establishing the identity of anyone who might choose to claim the title and estates. After it was gone Hubert's father had his own portrait put in its place. It looks as if a blight were on it, doesn't it?"

Geoffrey stepped back a pace or two to get a different viewpoint and stood gazing at the canvas with his head judicially upon one side.

"Do you think," he ventured at last, "that I could have more light upon it? It is so dim here I can hardly see."

Lady Frankfield laughed across him into Mieckleham's eyes. "We put it there, didn't we, Tom?" she explained, "because it was such a poor old daub at best. And now you want us to hold a candle to our shame. Very well. I'll have it taken down and you can examine it at your leisure, after we have had a cup of tea."

"Why can't I lift it down now?" asked Mieckleham. And before she could reply he had stretched up his long arm and unfastened it from its hook. He bore it, Geoffrey and Lady Frankfield following, to the fuller light. There was a moment of silence while they all three looked, and then Lady Frankfield gave a little gasp and shrank back against Mieckleham with a sort of shudder.

For a curious thing had happened.

From out of the blur and stain of the feeble background there appeared, clearly visible and distinct, the outlines of a vigorous face and form, neither of which had anything to do with the portrait on the same canvas of "Hubert's father." In fact, they seemed, in the clearer light, to reduce his likeness to a

shadow and to assert their right to dominate.

Mieckleham gave a short, nervous laugh.

"The deuce!" he said. "But this is interesting though! It seems to grow plainer every minute, and Gad! I declare I've seen the face before! It's perfectly familiar! I say, Geoffrey, old man, what does it mean? How do you explain it? Of course there's no spook business about it. It must be some painter's trick. Tell us, what does it mean? How does it come there? Where have I seen it before?"

Geoffrey's face was very pale and his voice was not altogether steady as he replied.

"Spook business! Certainly not. It's the simplest thing in the world. Merely the canvas has been used twice, and the later portrait has faded while the earlier has remained. We often use old canvasses to paint over. They're smoother. They don't eat up the oils. So it's no painter's trick either, Tom, you see, and as for the face being familiar——" he broke off abruptly and did not go on.

"But I don't understand," insisted Lady Frankfield, bending low and peering down into the canvas as if she wanted to fish up some hidden mystery with her eyes. "Whose portrait is this then? The under one—the one that is not Hubert's father?"

Geoffrey did not answer.

"Perhaps," ventured Mieckleham slowly, "perhaps it's the eldest son himself. Don't you remember, his canvas disappeared and they used his frame for my uncle's portrait?"

"Do you wish it restored, Lady Frankfield?" interrupted Geoffrey suddenly, and with a certain harshness in his voice. "If so, I will take it home with me now. The frame

must remain here. It will be no trouble—and I must go."

And though Lady Frankfield urged and Mieckleham kindly expostulated, he could not be induced to stay, but took his leave at once with the canvas in his possession. He would have none of Tom's company on the way either, but went alone in the hansom direct to his studio.

Once there he locked the door upon himself, set the canvas upon a chair in his strong north light, and then went rummaging among a stack of old stretchers that stood face inward against the wall for one which he presently found and placed over against the Frankfield portrait, so that the two stood fairly side by side. It was the copy he had made of his great-grandfather's miniature, the "fine old chap" who had set up his own standards and stuck to them when he knew that if he did his father would divert the estates from him and transfer them to his younger brother.

The two portraits stood fairly side by side. The same sunshine fell direct from the skylight on them both, the same face in each was turned toward the sunshine. Geoffrey's hands clasped and unclasped each other feverishly. "It's as simple," he muttered to himself, "as simple as the alphabet. But who could have guessed. My father never knew—or if he did he did not care. And I was never told. And now when it would mean so much to me—Mieckleham says he—Frankfield—'s a brute and ill-uses her. Who knows? She might leave him. And if I had the title she might—Oh, God! what am I saying!"

He bent over and peered into the canvas as Lady Frankfield had done before him, probing it with his eyes for something that he knew too well already. "No, no!" he burst out at



"He worked until the last ray of light had faded."

See page 510.

length, "his way was better. Love and a lost cause—and no matter about the rest. Besides—Mieckleham——"

The name, singularly enough, brought back the memory of that day—long ago it seemed to him now—when Tom had told him of Lady Frankfield's wish to have him paint her portrait, and when he had shown his friend the picture of his brave

young forebear and told him the story of his disinheritance. "After all," he had said, "there was something fine about the fellows in mediaeval days, the ones who made their own code of conduct, and ground their own paints and chiselled their own marbles and built their own fiddles. I'll be blest if I don't think it paid them in the long run. At least their honor and their

colors and their statues and their music lasted longer than ours will. They went slower than we do, so that occasionally the 'wing of recompense' could overtake them."

And if he let things remain as they were, deliberately sacrificed his claim to the title, the estates, let them abide Frankfield's and later, perhaps, Mieckleham's, what wing of recompense would be swift enough to overtake him in his quickened wretchedness. For he knew it now—he had known it all along. He loved her. And she—if she were free—of course she would choose Mieckleham. Unless it were true, what the gossips had said and what Mieckleham had denied—that she would indeed give herself for a title. And if he, Geoffrey Yorke, held the title—?

He loved her! Loved her so that, even if what they said were true, he thought he would not have cared, as long as she was his. But how about Mieckleham who loved her, too? Mieckleham, who had been good to him?

He grabbed up the Frankfield portrait, set it on his easel with a furious energy and got out his palette and brushes. He would "restore" it, as he had promised.

He worked away with savage intensity until the last ray of light had faded and until the last vestige of the under portrait had been effaced. Then he set himself to packing, for he was going away—"going home."

At midnight his trunk stood strapped upon the dais—the dais upon which Lady Frankfield had so often sat—and Geoffrey had cast himself upon the couch and was lying, face downward, upon the cushions, not sleeping, but being very still, when suddenly he was aroused by a furious rapping upon

the door. He opened it hurriedly and Mieckleham, white-faced and trembling, entered stumblingly.

"Tom!" burst out Geoffrey, aghast at sight of his hollow eyes. "For heaven's sake, what is it?"

"He's dead," Mieckleham stated simply; all the strength had gone out of his voice as it had from his body.

"Dead?" repeated Geoffrey with dull stupidity.

"Yes, Frankfield. He's dead. He was brought in not an hour after you left. Was thrown off his horse and had the life trampled out of him. Oh, God! it was ghastly! And just this afternoon I was saying I could not even have the satisfaction of wishing him dead because—I—would come into the title."

Geoffrey went over to him and put his hand on the heaving shoulders.

"Tom, my boy," said he kindly, "don't lash yourself like that. I know all about it, dear old fellow. I mean, how you feel. But don't give way to it. Don't let it torture you."

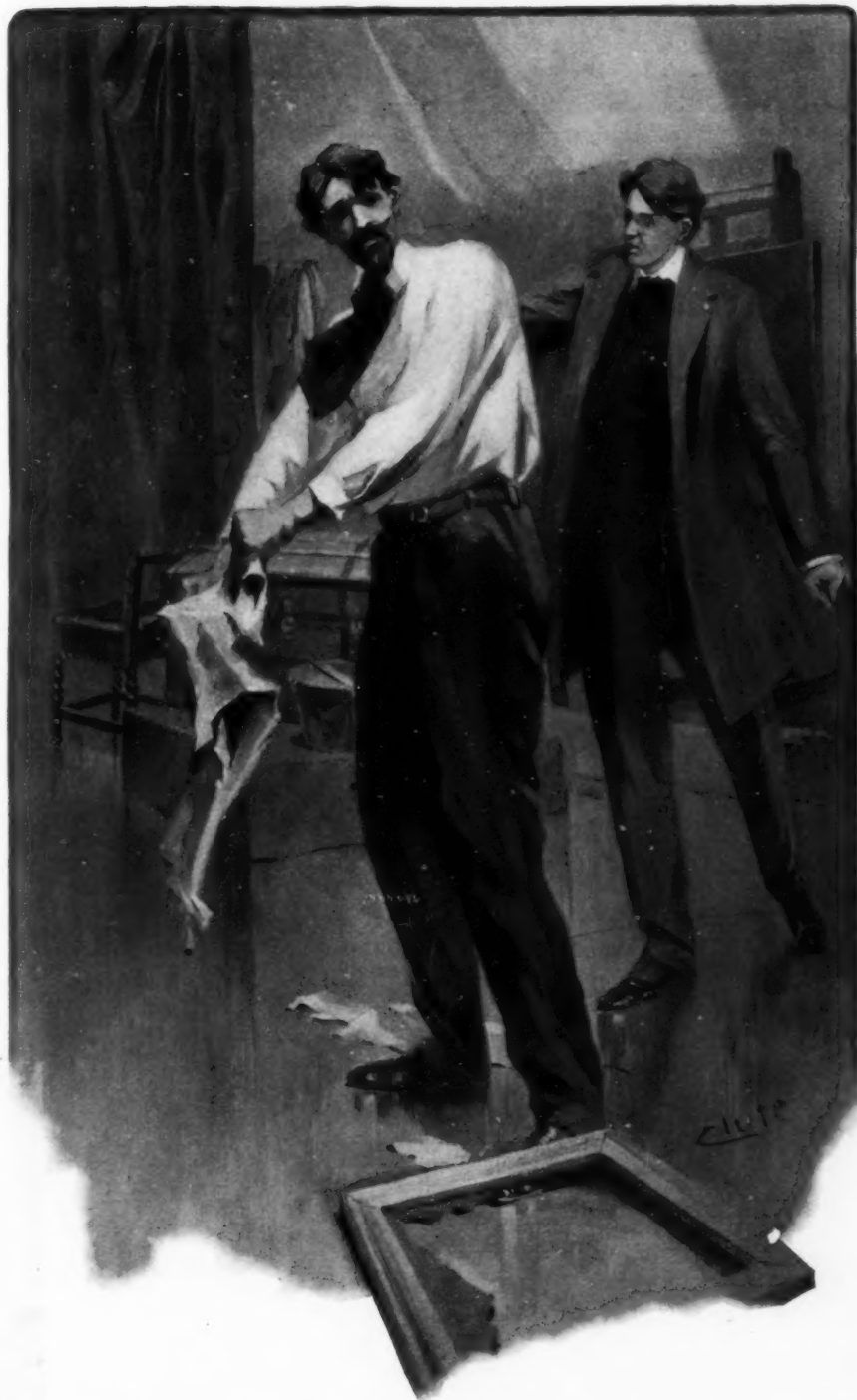
They sat together, talking in low, strained voices until the morning broke. Then in the cold light Mieckleham staggered up and began to pace the floor in his old fashion.

Geoffrey wondered dimly what it was that, with all their talking, and in spite of many efforts, Mieckleham had found it impossible to say. But of course he could not ask and the other tramped back and forth in silence.

Suddenly he came to an abrupt halt just beneath the skylight.

"Geoffrey!" he shouted, pointing to an unframed canvas which stood propped against a chairback.

Geoffrey came up, but when he saw he closed his lips and turned away.



“Wrenched the canvas from its stretcher and tore it into shreds.”

See page 512

He felt a heavy hand upon his shoulder.

"This picture," began Mieckleham dazedly, "this portrait—you said it was your ancestor and yet—and yet—it is the same face that stood out from behind the painted likeness of Hubert's father. What does it mean? It can't be—but it *is*—it must be—the eldest son—the one who was not disinherited after all, and whose descendants—Ah! then it is *you* who inherit——"

"No!" shouted Geoffrey, and wheeling about he snatched the canvas—"the only thing in the way of a likeness in existence that would be of use in establishing the identity of anyone who might choose to claim the title and estates," as Lady Frankfield had said—wrenched it from its stretcher and tore it up and down, many times, into ribbonlike shreds.

Mieckleham gazed at him dumbly. "What? —What?" he stammered at last.

"It's all right," muttered Geoffrey curtly. "I promised her I'd restore it—and I've done it. And now—I'm going home."

Mieckleham was never quick to grasp, and now, for what seemed to

Geoffrey an eternity, he stood inwardly pondering his words.

"You promised—you'd restore it—and now—you're going home—That means to America?"

"That's what it means," returned Geoffrey, trying to assume a lighter manner.

"And when you—come back?"

"I'm never coming back."

Mieckleham looked at him for a moment, and then he strode forward with a gleam of savage mastery in his eyes.

"Curse you!" he broke out vehemently, "you're going home, are you? Do you think I'll stand by and let you go, when I know that she—Do you think I'll endure it to have her suffer any more? You're going home, you say? Not if I know it. You're going to stay *here*—where she wants you. And you're going to spend the rest of your life being good to her—do you hear that? And if you ever make her unhappy, by the Eternal, you'll have to answer to me for it. You're going home, are you? Well, not if what you call 'home' is anywhere away from this. Haven't you seen, you blooming, blind idiot; do you have to be *told*—that she loves you?"





The Guest of Honor

By Emily F. Wheeler

THE president of the Federation of Clubs in Oldbridge was in a predicament which drove her to the verge of distraction. She was new to her office; won, not without some struggle, over the stately and dignified Mrs. Thorne, who, for the four years which summed up its existence, had reigned undisputed. She was young, and married just long enough to have two lovely children, to whom—in the intervals of her club work—she was devoted. And being young and ambitious, she wished, naturally, to begin her official reign as brilliantly as possible. She had brave plans as to what, later, might be done through the Federation. She saw it influencing public opinion, asking the city council for free kindergartens or vacation schools, or something in the line of municipal art. And the first step to these good things was to make herself as popular as possible and prove her efficiency as a leader by a master stroke.

Now the Federation liked to begin the season with a reception to some distinguished woman. To its hundreds of members—for Oldbridge was rich in clubs, quiet, conservative, study clubs—it meant much to have the chance of meeting one of the greater lights in the club heavens, to listen to the words of wisdom which might fall from her lips and to criticise her manners and her gown. They had had some disappointments of course. Mrs. Victoria Stanley, president of the State Federation, had proved an insignificant

little woman in a dowdy gown, and the president of the great woman's club in the neighboring city had equaled their expectations as to dress and nothing more. But this year they felt sure of their game. Mrs. Weldon, after no little pains and trouble, had secured a woman who had written books and lectured before clubs and worked in reform movements, a woman whom even the humblest of the Federation members knew at least by name, though—and this made it all the better—she had never been in Oldbridge and very few of them had ever seen her. And more, as Mrs. Weldon knew, she was really a charming woman and had all her gowns from the best shops.

"I do feel that it will be a privilege to us all to meet Mrs. Honeywood," she had said to the committee of arrangements in session at her house. "I'm counting myself on the pleasure of entertaining her, and I want it to be the most brilliant affair Oldbridge has ever seen. We can't do too much for such a guest of honor."

And the committee, catching her enthusiasm, was leaving no stone unturned to carry out all her plans. It was to be at her own house—one of the prettiest in town—and all Oldbridge was looking forward to the great day.

And here, not three days before, when the cards were out, every arrangement made, and the three daily papers supplied with the photograph and biography of the distinguished guest, came a laconic note,

by special delivery, "So sorry not to be able to come; but I'm down with the measles."

If it had been anything else, Mrs. Weldon would have been more reconciled. Why in the world had she waited till past forty to have the measles? She called by telephone the two most important members of the committee, both good friends, and when her news was told consternation sat on every brow.

"What shall we do? Recall the invitations and wait till we can have her?"

"Oh, with every arrangement made," faltered the chairman; "isn't there some one else we could get from the city?"

"I've been over every name I could think of," answered the president. "It is quite hopeless, I fear, on such notice."

"Why not make it a reception to the old and new presidents?" Anne Hunt, the secretary, asked innocently. She had been out of town at the election and did not know that Mrs. Weldon's predecessor had not accepted gracefully her own retirement.

"I—I don't think Mrs. Thorne will come," murmured Mrs. Weldon. "I think she's not very well. She declined to be on the reception committee."

"She says," added the chairman, "that she has just worn herself out in the four years she has been in office, and now she means to take a good rest. And another thing, if we don't have it now we can't get Mrs. Albee to sing. She never does, you know, for nothing, and I only persuaded her by showing her what a fine advertisement it would be to sing at the very beginning of the season before all the nicest women in Oldbridge."

"What a pity Mrs. Honeywood

hasn't a double," cried Anne. She was devoted to Mrs. Weldon and suffered with her in the difficulty. "Anybody—a dummy—would do—if we only had her at hand."

"I think," faltered Mrs. Weldon, "we shall have to go on with it. Hamlet without any Hamlet. It's a social tragedy." Her laugh was almost hysterical. "But—I wonder—if it's advisable to advertise our failure? You see, they are all coming to meet Mrs. Honeywood, and if they hear—"

"Certainly not," answered Anne to her look of appeal. "We should just get into a muddle and throw cold water on the whole affair. Let them come, and the brilliancy of the reception will atone for the missing guest. You know I'm to write it up, and I promise you to do it well."

Mrs. Weldon really felt the disappointment more than any one else could. How Mrs. Thorne would rejoice at her discomfiture—Mrs. Thorne who had been so sure, when she heard of it first, that Mrs. Honeywood would never come. It was absurd to expect so busy a woman to come to them just for a frivolous reception. And then, next morning, as she was arranging her house in preparation for the decorators, the telephone bell rang rescue. It was a Mrs. Grey who called her, one of the new members. She had been in Oldbridge hardly a year, and few of the women knew her. She had not come to many of the meetings the winter before, and when she had she had given the others the impression that she was not properly impressed by their cleverness and culture. There was a dim feeling that she was too superior and exclusive for a good club woman.

"I've just had a telegram from Mrs. Orewood," her voice said now, "and Anne Hunt was here when it

came. It is Anne's idea, you understand. I've been expecting her for some time, and I meant, when she came, to give a large reception for her. She wrote last from Tokio and I supposed—but it seems she is in a hurry to get to New York to see her publishers about a new book. She will be here only two days—and she's very good-natured, and I think—if you want her——"

Mrs. Weldon felt like kissing the receiver in default of the sender. "Why it's a perfect god-send. Coming tomorrow—and just home from a tour 'round the world? And you really think she would be willing? We can never thank you enough, Mrs. Grey. She is really distinguished? Oh, of course, I know it must be all right, but you see I must know for the papers."

"She wrote 'Beyond the Breakers,'" answered the voice with a touch of that "superior tone" to which the Federation objected. "You remember it was the raging novel five or six years ago. Of course you read it then."

"I—I think I remember it. And what else? Of course she has gone on from such a success."

"She writes a good deal for art



"The telephone bell rang rescue."

magazines. She is most interested in that now. Her husband is rich and they have traveled ever since their marriage. I think her new book is something about Japanese art. Oh, she's very clever, I can assure you."

"It all sounds delightful. And she comes at nine? Well, I'll give her time to get her bonnet off, but not much more. The reception is at four—and of course you will be on the reception committee."

Then she rang up Anne Hunt to exchange congratulations and

give her the points for the papers. Next she ordered her carriage and drove to the Public Library. For it was plain she should know a little about the guest of honor's work before she asked her. The librarian didn't remember the novel, there were so many; but they found it in the fiction catalogue. The author's name was different, "but of course that's a pseudonym," Mrs. Weldon thought. She sat up half the night to read it, and didn't think it amounted to much. As for the articles on art, there were none in the current numbers under that name, and she had no time to go over bound volumes.

As she waited in Mrs. Grey's little

parlor, she repeated to herself that it must be all right, but it did seem odd—she prided herself on being a well-read woman—that she had never so much as heard of Mrs. Orewood. "If she's not presentable, I can't ask her; though if I don't now, I've made an enemy for life of Mrs. Grey." She sighed. The path of a zealous club woman is often thorny, and she who would hold office must be all things to all women.

The portieres parted, and a tall, fine-looking woman advanced, white-haired, but young, a strong, kindly face, full of character, and a gown which advertised a good tailor. Mrs. Weldon had meant to be diplomatic and not tell, till she had to, why the Federation of Oldbridge was so ready with a reception to a passing stranger. But she threw down all the cards after five minutes' chat, and begged Mrs. Orewood to be their guest of honor with a cordiality which left no doubt of her sincerity.

"Of course it will be a bore to you, to stand for hours and have a lot of women presented to you that you never saw before and probably never will again. You would much rather rest and visit with Mrs. Grey, but, you see——"

Her eager, flushed face appealed to the older woman as she hinted at the need of a personal triumph.

"I see—I see. To help another woman out of—a—a hole," Mrs. Orewood smiled. "Well, if you think I can, I'll do it for you."

"Oh, I can't thank you enough. And now, I must be sure of my points for the papers, you know. You wrote 'Beyond the Breakers.' I thought it charming."

"Did you?" Mrs. Orewood's eyes twinkled. "I never thought much of it myself. As it happens, my book was 'Over the Border.' And

you haven't had time to read that, I fancy."

"I'm afraid—I—never heard of it. But I shall read it now, and I'm sure it's much better than 'Beyond the Breakers.' And you write on art? You are just bringing out something on Japanese art?"

"Did Julia tell you that, too? Well, accuracy was never Julia's fault. No; Japanese art is rather overdone now. It's too much of a craze. I used to care for it, but I'm past it now."

"Oh, please, please tell me what I ought to know about you," moaned Mrs. Weldon. "It's shameful to be so ill informed."

"But you really haven't had time to find out. You never heard of me till yesterday, I'm sure." Mrs. Orewood's smile was charming. "Well then, I may as well tell you it all, for it's not a long story. I wrote for years, all sorts of hack work, and then I made a success with 'Over the Border.' It actually sold ten thousand copies, and that, eight years ago, was a triumph. I made enough to go abroad—the dream of my life—and there I met my husband. And as art and collecting were his hobbies, of course they became mine. And I may write a little book, just a monograph you know, on the Mohammedan art of India. That's my fad just now."

"O, the Taj Mahal and all that sort of a thing, I suppose," Mrs. Weldon answered, her subconsciousness busy with the need of giving the real facts to Anne Hunt who was probably writing it up all wrong at that very moment. And then, as Mrs. Grey came in, she rose to go. "If I may use your 'phone just a moment," she begged.

She flew to the closet where it was, thanking providence that it was shut in so that her every

word would not be overheard.

"Is that you, Anne? Yes, it's Mrs. Weldon. You haven't sent off that stuff yet? Yes, she's to be our guest, and she's charming. But her book isn't 'Beyond the Breakers.' It's 'Over the Border.' Over—the —Border.' And she isn't interested in Japanese art—thinks it too much of a fad. It's the Taj Mahal—I mean all those temples and tombs, you know, in India. She made a fortune out of her first book, and her husband is an art connoisseur, and she's writing a monograph—a mon-o-graph—on Indian art—not Red Indian; be sure you get it straight. And she's perfectly charming."

Mrs. Grey followed her out on the porch. "There's only one thing. Her only luggage is a suit-case; her trunks have gone on. And we're not at all the same size."

"My dear, I would rather receive her in that tailor-made than not have her. She's simply delightful. I'm sure you can arrange somehow."

She trod on air as she went home. The day was saved. And Mrs. Thorne would never have thought of such a master-stroke to retrieve the situation. Of course none of the women had ever heard of Mrs. Orewood; she must call some of them up and give them the points. For the rest it didn't matter; they might even think her the original guest. Well, what if they did? Indeed, might it not be just as well if they did. It would save so many explanations. And the sketch in the evening papers, why the women would read it after they were home

and it was all over. On the whole, why not leave it as it was? The morning *News* had said that Mrs. Honeywood of Clevelo was to be the guest of honor. It was such a nuisance to explain, and half the members would get it mixed if she tried to.

At four, in her best gown, she



"She sat up half the night to read it."

greeted Mrs. Orewood. That lady was in rich black lace with insets of oriental embroidery that turned her hostess green with envy. A diamond comb held up her lovely white hair; a chain of uncut topaz and rubies dangled from her neck, and a sunburst brooch held the place of honor on her breast. As she explained, she had learned by painful experi-

ence never to go anywhere in her own country without one good gown. She was altogether so satisfactory that Mrs. Weldon wanted to embrace her on the spot.

Only Mrs. Grey and Mrs. Weldon were in the reception line, and no one noticed the difference in the name, when it was used. It was the finger of providence that they were so alike. Indeed, in the crowded rooms intelligent talk early became difficult. They spoke of the lovely decorations and the beautiful day, and then Anne swept them on to the dining-room where charmingly gowned women dispensed from a ravishing table, coffee and chocolate, or to the library where sweet young girls in white presided over the *frappé* bowls.

"This is what comes of a young and enterprising president," one woman said to her neighbor. "We never had anything like this with Mrs. Thorne."

"Yes, and isn't the house lovely? I remember last year we had to take our church parlors, and they were hideous. Mrs. Thorne isn't here, is she?"

"I haven't seen her. But I don't think Mrs. Honeywood looks much like her picture in the morning paper."

"Oh, a newspaper print is always a caricature. I think she's perfectly lovely. And did you ever see anything equal to that gown? But I've always understood that her husband was rich."

"Anne Hunt told me that she made a fortune out of her first book. Do you remember what it was?"

"It was something on—really I'm not quite sure. I never read it. If you don't read a book nowadays the year it's new you never do. Anne told me she wrote on art. I never heard that before, but she looks

equal to writing on anything."

"Indeed she does. Isn't she lovely in that gown? And such a charming manner."

There were a few embarrassing moments. Miss Smith, who prided herself on reading everything worth while, stopped the line to tell the guest of honor how much she had enjoyed her "Love-letters of a Spinster," and Mrs. Grey had to be checked in her desire to enlighten Miss Smith. Mrs. Ames complimented her on some poems she never wrote, which *she* had known by heart for long years. "And I should be so glad to repeat one or two of them to our guests, Mrs. Weldon," she added. "It would give a literary touch, you know, to this lovely affair, and be a delicate compliment to her."

"I'm afraid we could not get them still long enough to listen," Mrs. Weldon answered sweetly, "but it's very kind of you to offer, and perhaps, at our next meeting." And Mrs. Ames was swept on by the tide.

Mrs. White, who was notoriously half-sighted, had met her before, and recalled the meeting as she took her hand.

"Ah, yes, so kind of you to remember me." And then the guest turned to the one behind Mrs. White. She had no need of talking; she smiled and smiled, and then Anne Hunt hurried them on, while every one repeated, "How charming she is!"

Suddenly from her coign of vantage at the end of the line, Mrs. Weldon saw Mrs. Thorne, cold, critical, stately, descending the stairs. She swept into the hall to meet her.

"How very sweet of you to come, Mrs. Thorne. I had quite given you up. They said you were ill, you know."



"At four she greeted Mrs. Orewood."

"I am far from well," answered Mrs. Thorne with chilling dignity, "but I felt it my duty to pay my respects to so distinguished a woman as Mrs. Honeywood. It is not often that our little town is so honored."

"And I'm sure you will find her charming—charming," stammered Mrs. Weldon, her heart in her mouth. For the first time it had occurred to her that there might be

ethical objections—at least in Mrs. Thorne's mind—to this change of guest. She mumbled both names as she presented her, and signed to Mrs. Grey to hurry her by. But Mrs. Thorne was not to be hurried.

"We have all heard so much of you, Mrs. Honeywood." Her clear voice made two or three women turn, and Mrs. Weldon was in a cold sweat. "It is a peculiar pleasure to

meet one whose work in the great field of reform has been so inspiring to other women."

"You are very kind, I'm sure," murmured the guest of honor.

"I have read your addresses—I may say I know your principles by heart. Your work for women——"

"I am always glad to help women," smiled the guest, "especially in difficulties, you know."

"Dear Mrs. Thorne," interrupted Mrs. Weldon, "look at the line behind you. Wait and come back later, please." ("Anne will take care of that," she added to herself.)

"But I am surprised," Mrs. Thorne said, five minutes later, to a friend, "to see such dress. I had understood that she was very simple. Why her diamonds alone—indeed this whole thing seems to me almost vulgar. Such display, so inappropriate for a Federation which stands for culture and civic reform. In my opinion we should aim always for simplicity in such affairs. And I had hoped for a quiet talk with her as to the progress of our Cause, but I might have known that in such a reception no rational conversation would be possible."

"We shall be rational all the rest of the year, you know," Anne Hunt said, coming up. "But do let me take you now to the dining-room, Mrs. Thorne. Did you ever see such a crush? I believe every last woman in the Fed. is here."

"One does not often have such a guest," answered Mrs. Thorne stiffly. "I suppose the Federation is not paying for all these decorations?" she added, looking at the bowls of roses everywhere and the looped smilax and ferns.

"Oh, no; Mrs. Weldon insisted on doing this. She wanted to do it all, but of course we wouldn't hear of

that. And she's giving us a beautiful reception, isn't she?"

"She does not look as I expected," Mrs. Thorne said, as she sat down and took her napkin. "So much more worldly. I had almost thought her pictures almost spiritual. Such an affair as this must be a bore to her. She has a soul above vanities."

And just here another woman came up. "Did you say, Anne, that her first book was 'Over the Border,' and that she made a fortune out of it? Miss Smith says it was 'Love-letters of a Spinster.'"

"Oh, I don't know. I may be mistaken. Miss Smith is authority, isn't she?"

"But Mrs. Honeywood has never written a novel," cried Mrs. Thorne. "That little book was just essays, with a bit of a story. A first trial of her wings, she calls it, before she became interested in reforms."

"Well, I never supposed she would condescend to anything so trifling as a novel," answered the other. "And I thought these reform women were usually dowdies. I expected some one like our guest last year. Do you remember her gown, Anne? Quite a contrast, isn't it?"

"My dear Anne"—a third woman had joined them—"what is the new book on art? Miss Smith wants to know so as to be the first to read it."

"But Mrs. Honeywood does not write on art," cried Mrs. Thorne, more and more bewildered and annoyed at the ignorance of these women.

"Mrs. Honeywood? Oh, I thought you knew. Is it a state secret, Anne? Surely, Mrs. Thorne, you didn't think this was Mrs. Honeywood? Why the picture in the papers—It's a friend of Mrs. Grey's, just back from a trip 'round the world. Mrs.

Honeywood had the measles and couldn't come."

"The measles? Impossible! There is some dreadful mistake here." Mrs. Thorne rose, dropping her napkin. "Am I to understand that Mrs. Weldon has palmed off an utter stranger—an imposter, possibly—on

Hunt? I demand an explanation."

"Well," Anne said, desperately, "she is a very distinguished woman, Mrs. Orewood, of New York. And she writes on art, the Taj Mahal and all that, you know. And she is to write a book on Indian art——"

"Art! Heathen art! I came to



"Mrs. Thorne, cold, stately, critical."

the Federation of Oldbridge? What do we know of Mrs. Grey and her friends? I—I never heard——"

"Perhaps you didn't get the name when you were presented," Anne answered.

"I addressed her as Mrs. Honeywood, and she—she accepted the name. What mystery is this, Anne

pay my respects to a reformer, an honor to her sex in public work. I have been deceived, betrayed."

Mrs. Thorne's voice failed her. She moved to the door. She would have liked to sweep from the house in her most impressive manner, but the crowd forced her to a slow and most trying progress up the stairs.

"What in the world is the matter with Mrs. Thorne?" the women whispered when a few minutes later they saw her leave the house, giving the hostess only a cold bow as she passed. There was an awkward moment. Something was wrong, they all felt it. They began comparing notes as to the facts communicated to various ones over the guest of honor, and found them decidedly confusing.

And then Anne Hunt saved the situation. She swept the reception committee and their guest into the little conservatory, where a special table was waiting for them, and before they emerged again she had glided from group to group with explanations.

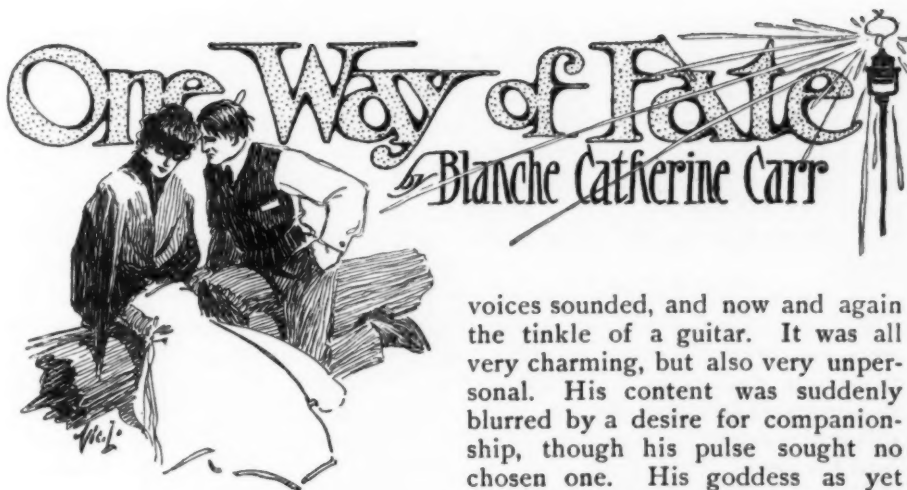
"And wasn't it awfully clever of Mrs. Weldon to think of it? We knew only two days ago that Mrs. Honeywood couldn't come, and she felt how disappointed you would all be. And then she heard of this friend of Mrs. Grey, really a most distinguished woman, only in quite a different way, you know, and rich—has just been round the world, and—and you will find out all about her in the evening papers. No, I can't give you all the details here, but it's all right. We have had the most brilliant reception, and the most distinguished guest in our history. I know you will say so when you read about her."

And as the tide of farewells began a few moments later, Mrs. Weldon

heard over and over, "Such a charming reception—so delighted—so glad to have met——" If the voices trailed off into an undistinguishable murmur it was plainly not for lack of good will to the guest of honor.

"It should have ruined Mrs. Weldon with the Federation," Mrs. Thorne told a friend some weeks afterward. "It was probably a bare-faced fraud. I never heard of the woman and no one I have asked ever did till that day. I understand Anne Hunt found some things on art under her name, but what does that prove? As for the novel, oh, of course some of the women talk about it, but I, for one, have no time for novels, especially by unknown writers. But it really seems to have strengthened her position with the Federation."

"It was such a lovely reception, you see," her friend answered apologetically. "And Mrs. Orewood was so distinguished looking and so beautifully dressed. Women do care for that, you know. And not to be quite sure who she was—well, I don't know why, but that seemed to give the last, piquant touch to the whole affair. But of course you, with your high sense of honor, would never have thought of a substitute guest. And did you know that Mrs. Orewood is going to send the Federation a special autograph copy of the monograph on Indian art as soon as it comes out?"



Fate is a capricious goddess, juggling our little lives strangely, and, I protest, partially. Thus some of us pour libations to her praise, and some do not. Thomas Patterson Cleeves, familiarly known as Pat, does. This is why.

At, to be exact, a quarter before ten o'clock one June night, he walked along the street of Dunford, a little Georgia town, with the satisfaction of a difficult duty, successfully performed, large upon him. He had interviewed Harthos Dabney, the despair of many older men of newspaper making, coming all the way from Washington to do it; and the approval of his energy-consumed chief, Terrill of the *Transcript* lay pleasingly before him. His long step swung triumph, and he whistled "The Conqueror" in half-tones, suggestive of his march.

The night was a filching from Paradise; so flower-scented, so rioting in moon splendor was it. The streets ran a silvered streak, edged by wide-spreading trees, smooth green lawns, and the far-apart houses of Southern comfort. On the wide galleries the outlines of light-gowned women and shirt-waisted men showed; laughter and gay

voices sounded, and now and again the tinkle of a guitar. It was all very charming, but also very unpersonal. His content was suddenly blurred by a desire for companionship, though his pulse sought no chosen one. His goddess as yet was of composite form. Spending the time until the twelve-forty train, at the shabby hotel, impressed him with a sense of vast waste.

Then, from a house standing near to the street, which Pat rightly guessed had been cut through the grounds, a creamy contralto called "Pat!" making that absurd nickname a melody to thrill the senses. Pat's responded abundantly.

It was no strange thing that he should meet some one who knew him, even here, for he had a large and various acquaintance; but the voice was strange, and he was sure such music would live in his memory. However, it was not in the nature of man to disregard such call, and he swiftly passed up the short path that led to the gallery, where two girls made two foaming masses of white ruffles, and a lighted cigarette marked a masculine presence in the shadow-hung hammock.

He and one of the girls said, "Thisbe," as Pat reached the steps, and the girl nearest him arose, taking a step forward. The moonlight was very revealing, and if her voice was the sort to be remembered, her face was one to make memory entirely its own. Delicately oval it was, rose-leaf and white; clouded

about with soft dark hair and lighted by black-fringed wide blue eyes.

A glance was sufficient to tell Pat that he had never seen her before, and fully ample for him to recognize the extreme desirability of gazing upon her indefinitely. Pat reached his conclusions swiftly, and accurately.

"Clearly a case of mistaken identity," he decided, as she smiled upon him, and braced himself for the explanation that should follow the discovery of her mistake, when the girl wavered and precipitated herself into his arms.

He was a step below her, and, quite naturally, his arms closed about her; quite naturally, too, in view of the scarlet temptation so near, he touched her lips with his own.

"Any way," he gave hasty argument to his conscience, "what else could a fellow do?"

She jerked back quickly, blushing consumingly. "Goodness!" she exclaimed.

"Certainly," said Pat.

Thisbe struggled with some emotion for a moment, then she passed one readjusting hand over her hair, and extended the other to him.

"How do you do," she said; "when did you get back?"

"This evening," said he, beginning to wonder if "the little dog at home" would know him. He glanced about for inspiration.

The other girl and the young fellow, who had been whispering and laughing together, gave him cordial greeting now, but as neither face was familiar, Pat concluded that he resembled some other man to an extraordinary degree, and took a chair near Thisbe, praying the Joss of his Luck, that he might be permitted to retain it until train time. An exasperatingly brief space now, he considered.

"How did you like it down there?" asked the other girl, whose name, it transpired, was Nan.

"Very much. Delightful place," said Pat with enthusiasm. Then he had second thought. Was he engaged to Thisbe? If so he should not rave over any place where she was not. He had a fine sense of the proprieties—in some ways—and, obviously, he was determined to do what was expected of him.

"Though, of course, I'd rather be here," he added, with a half glance at the fair profile Thisbe presented.

The Bertie-boy in the hammock giggled.

"Oh, of course," he said.

Decidedly he was engaged to Thisbe, Pat concluded. Lucky beggar.

"Very warm, wasn't it?" Thisbe's contralto murmured.

"Oh yes, but the—er—breeze was fine," said Pat.

"And the people?" asked Nan. "What are they like?"

"Now where," Pat wildly, if silently appealed to the prompter, whom, for the time, he was calling Chance, "where in the dickens *have* I been? Cuba or what hot spot? And what *are* the people like? If it was any warmer than this—It'll be one, two, three for Pat, in a minute, sure."

"Interesting," he hedged aloud, "wonderfully interesting."

"And their customs?" questioned Bertie.

Pat felt the coils tightening, but he had a nimble wit, and his blood ever met adventure more than half way.

"Different, of course, and—oh, yes," he said, boldly tempting fate, "I saw Sam."

"You did," the three chorused; "how is he?"

"Fine!" said Pat, elated by the



"Two girls, and a masculine presence in the shadow-hung hammock."

reception of his hazard. "Never saw him looking better."

"Well I think he should be ashamed," said Nan, "after all that has happened."

Pat quaked. Clearly he was in trouble again.

"Well, you know," he gasped, "we can't always judge—we may not altogether understand—the circumstances, you know."

Thisbe gave him a smile that was enthralling.

"That is so good of you," she said softly.

"You think so," he murmured delightedly. "Well, it has always seemed that way to me. How can we tell? There's Blakely now, a fellow I used to know——"

Suddenly forgetful, Pat slipped his double's role, and was telling a

story of newspaper experience, to which she gave rapt attention. And then there was an hour of talk about books and events, and thought-things, in which Nan and Bertie took small part. Thisbe's eyes showing swift response to his own, grave look or gay; once or twice she voiced a thought that had long been his, and this hour and her blue eyes brought to him the light that should illumine the years of the man who sees it.

His goddess became individual, and the rosebuds of his careless fancy bloomed into a great and burning rose of desire. Here she was, a beautiful girl who was interested in things other than personalities. Who was thoughtful without being pedantic, and whose humor was swift without being frivolous; tender and with a voice of gold. One to open the gates of Paradise for a man, and he knew it, entirely, convincingly he knew it; with his senses and soul straining at the leash, and knew, too, that the light and the rose were not for him. For surely, surely was she engaged to that namesake double of his, she was not the girl to kiss casually, and even if he should fling honor to the winds, and try to win her, she could never forgive his stealing that kiss.

His heart went very heavy, and he could no longer speak frankly, so he put on his part, again, and talked rapid nonsense; taking up Nan's guitar and singing a noisy jingle of "coon" songs. The booming town-clock sounded the third quarter after eleven, and his exit. He said "Good-night" jestingly to Nan and Bertie, but when he took Thisbe's hand the laugh caught in his throat. His troubled eyes sought hers, but her face was grave and her eyes were averted. He saw that she knew, but in her sweet mercy withheld expo-

sure. His hand trembled from the touch of her fingers.

Any apology or explanation was impossible, for Nan and Bertie stood close at either hand, so he could only say "Good-bye" and go down the street, cursing his fate; yet he blessed it, too, for the beauty of the revelation given him. It would render tasteless all the years to come, he knew, but at least he had seen the true gold, albeit another man's treasure—he found some slight comfort in hating his double—and yet, but for his folly he might go back and explain and take the chance he somehow felt might have been his.

But his folly was there, unsurmountable, that one kiss making a chinkless wall that would bar him forever from the Thisbe of his desire. Certainly he had been obsessed. Though after all, it was easily understood—by a man, but by a woman, never. So, his thought.

He reached the hotel and flung his things into his case with undue violence.

"I might have had a chance—a fighting one, and I'd have fought it to a finish," he said, "and somehow I believe I could make her care. What a chum she would make; she understood so. And what a sweetheart, with that true sort of ring—and to think that I don't dare to face her. Fool—idiot," he reviled.

Meanwhile, Thisbe and her companions were behaving in a manner amazing and mystifying.

As soon as Pat was beyond ear shot, Nan and Bertie broke into ecstatic giggles, exclaiming simultaneously, "He'll do."

"A regular peach, and you're not so slow yourself, Thisbe," Bertie declared. "I'll look him up to-morrow and tell——"

"You'll do nothing of the kind," flashed Thisbe, who had been silently gazing down the street, "and I'm going home on the twelve-forty train."

"Oh, Thisbe! No," cried Nan. "You've just come and——"

"I'll come back again later," said Thisbe. "I simply can't stay now, and chance meeting him."

"Why! didn't you like him?" Nan questioned. "I thought he was mighty nice."

"Oh, yes, he is nice, but I can't meet him now after—well, I'm *going*. Telephone for a cab, Bertie, and I'll get ready. You can send my trunk to-morrow, Nan."

Thisbe donned traveling attire to a running fire of expostulation from Nan, who packed her suitcase, and to the lash of her own thoughts. They were upon lines strikingly similar to Pat's.

Assuredly he was nice; just about the most satisfying man she had ever met; clever and entertaining, without the obtrusiveness of most clever people; sympathetic and generous, too. How he had defended the recreant Sam. And she *would* have liked to know him so much; and certainly, he had seemed to like her. Thisbe could not fail to recognize admiration, for it had been her portion since her earliest years. If things had only been different they might have been quite good friends. But now—"Oh dear!" being a feminine echo of Pat's expletives. Her eyes brimmed with tears. "No, Nan, there is no use talking, I can't," she said to her friend's fortieth appeal, and her voice broke.

"You're crying, oh, dear," wailed Nan, "and we thought it such a joke."



"The girl precipitated herself into his arms."

"I'm not; it was," said Thisbe, shrouding herself in a long silk coat, "to the spectators," she murmured.

Thus the twelve-forty train carried Pat in a smoking compartment, his hat pulled low over his eyes, and his teeth set hard on a cigar; and Thisbe in the rear sleeper, retiring at once to her berth. Neither being aware of the other's presence, this

would seem to spell little, but Fate is very thorough-going when once she has lent her hand. Witness: At three-thirty, the engine jumped the track and plunged down an embankment, the long line of cars crashing after.

Pat, who was still awake, was a bit bruised and his head was slightly cut, but he quickly pulled himself together, and scrambling out, set to work helping to release the frightened and sometimes injured passengers. It was not until the first stress was over that he remembered his paper, and started for the town and telegraph office.

Some improvised torches had been set up and he was threading his way through the blinding alternation of shadow and flare, when the course of his steps, for the second time that night, was changed by the call of that golden voice.

"Pat—oh, Pat!"

It sounded alarm, appeal, and Pat turned back as he would have turned from the very portals of heaven, hurrying with quivering nerves and heartbeats thickened with apprehension.

He did not stop to wonder why she was there nor to remember that an hour before he had felt that he dared not face her. Just as Thisbe had forgotten that she was going home to avoid meeting him, when she had seen his tall figure exaggeratedly heroic in the torch glare, suggesting a half forgotten girlish vision of Siegfried, and had called to him for the help he looked so capable of rendering.

Fancying and fighting terrors he groped.

"Thisbe, Thisbe," he cried, and guided by her answer, at last he found her, pinned down by wreckage, bruised and shaken, but happily unhurt, and, as his own courage

approvingly recalled afterward, keeping her nerves well down. His heart sang a tumult of joy that for a little time made him quite mute. That she was here and he was going to aid her was all there was of definiteness.

He worked "with the strength of ten," and soon he had her in his arms again. Tenderly he lifted her up and carried her to a place apart among the trees, where a fallen trunk made convenient seat. Here he placed her, and then consciousness laid itself upon them and they silently faced each other in the cold light of the early dawn.

A gray kimona was striving to veil Thisbe's beauty, and her long hair hung a loose tangle, but she was a magnet to draw Pat's heart even more than when her graceful fripperies were in place and her poise had been unshaken; and though he was disheveled and his forehead was blood-stained, his swift strong hands and unready tongue found the beat of her heart more certainly and forcefully than when he held his sure, easy grasp on the situation.

They had proper appreciation of the externals in modes and manners, these two, but in them both a strong red vein ran to the unveiled real. And both were recognizing it, and both were whispering sadly, "We will never meet again! Explanation is inevitable now and then."

The deluge was evidently expected.

Thisbe shivered a little as she strove for her courage, and in an instant Pat had stripped off his coat and wrapped it about her despite her protests.

"I won't have you taking cold," he ruled, tenderly the master.

"But you?"

"Oh, I'm immune. I never take cold," he assured.

This was brief respite, but the inevitable was still facing them. They drew deep breaths of resolution and started to speak. Being a woman, Thisbe gained the advantage.

"I—I want to tell you," she began.

"You need not," Pat interrupted. "I know. Know that you thought me—a friend, and I was cad enough to take advantage of your mistake. There is no apology sufficiently abject for me to make, and I can't expect you to forgive me. You can't possibly think worse of me than I do of myself, but I do wish you would try to believe that ordinarily I behave as a gentleman—that—"

"Oh, hush, please," Thisbe cried. "You were not to blame at all. I must tell you—and *please* sit down—you look so big standing there, I haven't the courage."

Obediently Pat dropped down upon an adjacent stump and marveled. "One or the other of us is certainly daft," he thought, "if not both."

Thisbe interlaced her fingers and



"Thisbe donned traveling attire."

spoke rapidly, the intake of her breath telling of near-by tears; her eyes resolutely on the ground.

"It all began with Bertie, Nan's cousin, telling about a test a fraternity gave their candidates. They would send him to a town near, where they would arrange to have some girl call him by name and assume to know him. And if he accepted the situation and carried it off all right he was elected."

"I see," said Pat, "but I'm through with all that. How—"

"We could see you coming down the street for some dis-

tance, and—and something in—in the way you walked or whistled made me think that you could dominate the affair. I said so, and they teased me to try it.

"They knew you were a stranger. Every one knows every one else in Dunford. Finally they dared me to call any name on chance, and—and I was foolish enough to do it. I called the most impossible name, and it happened to be yours."

"And there is no other—Pat?"

Pat asked, ready to shout exultant hurrahs.

"No other to my knowledge," she said, "and—and"—deep crimson burning away the delicate tints of her cheek and brow—"you must not think—that—I did not mean to meet you as I did, but, oh!" with sudden desperation, "I'd been sit—my foot was asleep and when I stepped on it, it gave way."

This, her confession's finale, was muffled by her covering her face with her hands.

"Oh," said Pat inadequately. His pulses were beating jubilates of delight that were well near to smothering him, and he sought for coherent phrase in a jungle of what seemed meaningless words. That greeting had seemed inexplicable and clouding. There is a limit to even the license allowed a "frat" test, but now, the light shone clear golden and the fragrance of the rose was about him.

But Thisbe was very miserable. His silence was disappointing, and the eyes she lifted were large and bright with tears.

"Please don't think I do such things," she murmured. "It was

dreadful of me and I simply can't think why—or what possessed me."

"I can," said Pat, inspiration prompting him at last. "I know." He deftly slipped forward on his knees beside the trunk, and gently took one of her cold little hands in both of his own. "Know that away back in the land where souls live before they come to this, it was willed that ours should—should meet, I—I think, to walk together, and it was the chosen hour, and you called because it was to be—I can't expect you to know this just yet—I can't ask you to—but oh, Thisbe, some day you *will* know?"

He weighted her long, downcast lashes with his future, and watched with eyes that pleaded and craved.

They wavered, and then the radiance of stars looked upon him beneath them.

"Yes, I believe I shall know—Pat," she said. Then she broke into a little laugh. Why, it's Arcady. We don't even know each other's last names."

"It is Paradise," Pat said softly, "for we know each other."

And Thisbe made no denial.





WHY

By Ethel Shackelford.

Miss Cushing was bored—uncomfortably bored, and there was something about von Wagenheim's reception room that made her nervous. Possibly it was the rows of pictures of huge hands which ran around the room under the moulding. She toyed with a magazine and tried to feel that it was not really such a very long time she was being kept waiting.

Suddenly a door flew open, and in stepped a soldierly, well-dressed German. He looked like a young man, yet his face was a saddened one and his hair was shot with gray. He had the eye of one who sees what he looks at, and he looked at Miss Cushing very closely. He stood nearer than the girl thought necessary, and he looked at her in a searching, penetrating, interested way which made her feel that his eyes had drawn out all the reality of her being, and left only a shadow. She returned his gaze straight in the eye, but she did not speak.

"I have not yet had my luncheon," said the great palmist, with a slight German accent. "You have not time to wait, but you will excuse me, and wait anyway. *Ich komme bald wieder.* I am so glad that you speak German."

Miss Cushing was astonished. She had not spoken a single word to this man in German, or any other language. But she did speak German. Was it a coincidence that he hit upon this? Or did he just know things without knowing why he



knew them? He was a most extraordinary person! Why did he show such a decided interest in her, she wondered. Wouldn't she better go out while he was at luncheon—no one would see her. She was preparing to leave, but just as she had risen, von Wagenheim came back.

"I did not eat my luncheon," he said. "I can have luncheon every day, but you I cannot have every day. Tell me, why did you say to yourself that you would run away before I came back? That was very unkind of you. Come this way into my study."

The room into which the palmist took Miss Cushing was hung with oriental embroideries, and there were many souvenirs and valuable gifts from people of note, and a lot of medals and autographed photographs. But here, too, were the hands—dozens of the weird things. The room was so hot that Miss Cushing slipped her jacket off and

laid it across her knees, as she sat down on a quaint, carved chair. Von Wagenheim picked up another chair and set it down before her. He tossed the jacket onto a divan near by. Such an action Miss Cushing would have thought charming in a society man, or an actor in the scene in which the leading lady comes to ask the return of her letters, but in an utter stranger, a palmist—a sort of wizard—it was—well, possibly—humorous. Miss Cushing smiled. Von Wagenheim dropped forward on his elbows and looked up into her face as if he could not bear to miss one bit of her expression. He smiled, too, but his smile was tender and sad, while the girl's was merry.

Miss Cushing was not conscious of being bored just now.

"Let me see your hands, *mein Herz*," said von Wagenheim.

"Will you be good enough not to use any endearing terms when speaking to me?" said Miss Cushing coldly. "You must not forget that I came to see you professionally, only. You are exceedingly impertinent."

Von Wagenheim looked out of the window meditatively, and then back at the girl. With a touch of amusement he said, "Sweetheart, you make a mistake in trying to go through the world disciplining everyone you meet. You have always done it, and it has brought you nothing but disappointment."

There was something very soothing in this man's personality. Miss Cushing could not understand why she was staying and why she was neither angry nor annoyed. Turning to the palmist seriously, she remarked, "Well, really that is not a bad guess."

"I never *guess*," he answered. "Tell me, you are of an artistic temperament, aren't you?"

"I did not come here to tell you what I am," she replied.

"That's so," said the man pleasantly. "And it is not necessary for you to tell me. I know that you are artistic—musical. But you will never do anything with it. You came here simply because you were a little unhappy and very much bored; you were seeking diversion. Is it not so? Don't bother to answer me. I know you are tired."

He reached for one of her hands, and unbuttoning the glove and ripping it off, he picked up the magnifying glass and began studying the lines. Miss Cushing tried to do the proper thing and resent being touched, but instead, she sat still and allowed Miss Cushing to continue to surprise herself.

"Quite right," said the palmist approvingly.

"I don't understand you," she replied.

"Oh yes, you do," he said, and then watching her through half-closed lids until every trace of the amused expression had left her face, he buried his face in her hands and kissed them.

"I love you," he said.

The man's dignity and earnestness compelled Miss Cushing to listen to him, but she ventured rather weakly, "But you have no right to say such things to me—it is absurd."

"Every man has a right to speak his love," he answered quietly.

"Do you suppose that I have given my whole life to the study of the human soul without being able to know the woman I love when I meet her? Do you suppose that all my work for all these years has gone for so little that I cannot make her hear me—and be at peace with herself and me—and all the world? I love you—I love you!"

Miss Cushing rose slowly. "Do

you realize, Herr von Wagenheim," she began, "that you run great risks in talking to women in this way? Don't you know that I, for instance, could go away from here and say that you were neither a proper nor a safe person for a woman to call upon?"

It is always *why* in this life—always why!"

"I am going," she said.

"You will come again to-morrow?" he asked eagerly.

"I shall never come again," she said.

Von Wagenheim started to open



"But you have no right to say such things."

Von Wagenheim held the girl by the shoulders and gazed far down into her eyes. "Yes," he said thoughtfully, "I know that—just as I know you will not do it."

"Why do you love me?" asked the girl childishly.

"Why does the sun shine? Why does it rain? Why is there a sharp pain in my heart? Why, why, why?

the door, but as the girl came near him, he caught her in his arms and held her close to him an instant. "Then you will come another day, my Life," he whispered passionately. "I will draw you to me no matter where you are or where I am. Sometime now, or in the life to come, we shall meet again, and I shall feel the presence of your soul whether it

be still in its sweet human form, or whether it comes to me a thousand years hence in a flower or a cloud or a song. Some day I shall win you for my own, *mein Herz—mein Herz!*"

It was in New York two years later that Miss Cushing sat trying to amuse herself with a paper one rainy afternoon. In the advertisement columns she saw the name "von Wagenheim" standing out in big letters. She sat looking at the palmist's announcement that he would receive his patrons one more week only, and she smiled at the recollections that name brought back to her. Could it be that von Wagenheim was in earnest? She knew that foreign men are much quicker in realizing that they love than our own men. Strange as it all was, the man seemed desperately, yes, almost bitterly in earnest. "He must have meant it—he must have meant it," said the girl to herself. "Of course any man would say this palmist was crazy, but a woman knows when a man means the words he speaks. I believe, I believe—" A mischievous light came into the girl's eyes.

An hour later Miss Cushing was nervously trying to read a magazine in von Wagenheim's reception room. Here were those same pictures of hands which had haunted her now and then since she had first seen them in St. Louis two years before. Two men and a woman were ahead of her, so she had ample time to ask herself for an explanation of her being there—and to be evasive. She sat in front of a mirror, and she was delighted to see how cleverly she had disguised herself. She had the appearance of a careworn woman of forty as she sat all stooped, and she was shabby to a degree in her old black dress and impossible hat. She wore spectacles which were

fairly killing her, they were so strong, and besides, she wore a heavy black veil. On the third finger of her left hand was a plain marriage band, and her gloves were out at the finger tips. "He said he would feel my soul if it passed him in a flower anywhere in eternity, but he did not say anything about knowing me in two years if I turned up in my washerwoman's clothes. Dear me, why am I so nervous?"

In a few moments Miss Cushing was shown into von Wagenheim's study.

"Good afternoon," said the palmist shortly. "Will you have a full reading—five dollars—or will you take a short reading for one dollar?"

"One dollar," replied Miss Cushing in a meek and nasal voice.

"Kindly take off your gloves," began von Wagenheim. "Now let me see. Well, you are rather a domestic person with more good intentions than ability. You have some musical feeling. You take things too seriously and live on your nerves. Cultivate a sense of humor. You have a nice mentality and some magnetism—especially for women, although men sometimes like and appreciate you after having known you for many years. Your girlhood was a disappointing one, and your marriage was full of care and sorrow. You will marry again between the years of forty and forty-five and have one son. Pay more attention to dress and you will find that it gives you a new feeling of courage and ambition. You might do well as a nurse or teacher. Are there any questions you would like to ask me?"

Miss Cushing thought not.

"Your middle life and old age will be full of peace and happiness; and with more attention to detail, you will have success in whatever branch

you take up," the palmist went on as the girl made her way to the door.

"Thank you," she said.

"Oh, that's all right! Good afternoon."

Anyone being near Miss Cushing as she reached the street, could easily have heard her say to herself, "This is the first time I ever got

sentimental over the wrong man—I hope it will be the last. But still there are a few little things I don't understand. Why does it rain? Why don't I feel more of a fool than I do—or do I? Why, oh why did I ever presume to fancy myself *jolly-proof*? Why? And why, and still why—is it always *why* in this life?"





THE OTTERVILLE TEAM HUNT.

BY
NORMAN H.
CROWELL

"Hottest hunt I was ever in," remarked old Ez Boggs, as he detached a forkful of finecut from his bale and bundled it into his countenance, "was back in Otterville durin' th' winter o' '82. Owin' to th' thunderin' cold, Otterville was jest about as dead as Napolion Bone-apart—everything was froze tighter'n a puckered warwhoop drawn up with a log-chain. They hadn't been but one sewin'-bee an' two hoss trades in th' hull section up to New Year, an' th' fellers was jest kinder pluggin' aroun' on their legs like stove-up mules.

"Things drug along real lonesome till th' last end o' January, th' only happenin' bein' a rafflin' match fer a busted hossfiddle, which same was won by Deafy Smith on an expendicher uv 'leven cents.

"We was all down into Salsbury's mack'ril parlor th' last night in January, an' after we'd et up th' profits o' th' 'day, Jabe Sanders purposes thet us fellers complicate up some sorter doin's afore we git so fur gone our pelts won't be no use fer tannin' pupposes.

"'Good idee. What'll it be, Jabe?' says Steve Lee, grinnin' like a chessycat over to where Salsbury was a-figgerin' up 'is losses.

"'Well,' says Jabe, squintin' one eye down knowin'er'n a chipmunk, 'what's th' matter with gittin' up a team hunt fer to-morrer?' says he.

"'Is they one lost?' says Jim Hackett. Jim had a lot o' hosses an', o' course, was interested at once.

"Jabe peeled 'is eye at Jim fer a hull secont afore he could ketch 'is wind.

"'Don't you know what a team hunt is, you hunk o' ignorance?' says Jabe, real pernikkity.

"'Not yit I don't,' says Jim. Jabe gin a snort.

"'A team hunt,' says he, 'is where two fellers chews up sides. Th' two sides go huntin' an' th' fellers bringin' in th' most game git a bankit which is paid fer by th' losin' crowd. Kin ye percolate thet?'

"'I reckon it'll soak in in time,' says Jim, 'but to-morrer is too sudden—make 'er day after to-morrer.'

"'Jim Hackett,' says Jabe, sorter mournful, 'be you so onpatriotic as thet? Er be you so oneddedicated thet you don't know what day to-morrer is?'

"Jim he cogertated a minute, then he says:

"'Ground hog day, ain't it?'

"'Ground hog nuthin',' says Jabe, 'it's Febbywary fust, th' annievers'ry o' th' father o' 'is—th' father o' Gawge Washin'ton. It's got to be to-morrer er I ain't in,' Jabe says, fiercer'n a scairt cat.

"'Well,' says Jim, 'I ain't startin' up no argymint. Bein' as to-morrer

is—er—what it is, I reckon we'd orter celebrate it one way er another. I'd jest as soon go into thet huntin' arrangement as not. Wouldn't you, Deafy?" says he, liftin' 'is voice a shade er two.

"'Yep, I had a bobtailed one once, but he wa'n't no good on

chews up sides fer th' puppose o' nawg'ratin' a team hunt thet'll stir this town from A to Izzard,' says he.

"After glarin' roun' a spell he says, 'Do I hear a secont?'

"'Thet's only a clapboard,' says Salsbury, lookin' up, 'I'll have it fixed to-morrer.'



"Deafy's hearin' got wuss th' more I talked."

chicken,' says Deafy, noddin' 'is skull.

"Jim he takes a look at Deafy, then snorts an' draws in 'is neck like a mudturtle.

"'On th' suppersition thet you fellers is all in favor o' this 'ere hunt,' says Jabe, 'I make a motion thet Jim Hackett an' Ez Boggs

'Jabe looked weak fer a bit, but braced up again.

"'If not, I'll secont it myself,' says he, 'an' cast th' anonymous vote o' th' hull crowd in favor o' th' question. Jim Hackett an' Ez Boggs is 'lected—perceed, gentleman.'

"After some hagglin', we got our

men—four to a side. Jim got Steve Lee, Job Pepper an' Sol Adams. I got Len Bossett, Deafy Smith an' Jabe. After Salsbury had writ down th' names in black an' white Jabe riz up an' gins out th' p'ticklers.

"This 'ere is to be a sorter leg contest," says he, 'each leg figgerin' ten points. Fer instinct, a rabbit'll score up forty, a quail twenty, an' so on. Onderstan' thet?"

"Yep," says Sol, 'an' I know where they's a whoppin' snarl o' pigeons—'

"They're barred out," says Jabe. 'Tame things don't go. Everything must be wild er ondomesticated.'

"Big er little, eh?" says Jim.

"Sure; size cuts no figger, jest so it has legs," says Jabe.

"What time?"

"Start from 'ere at ten o'clock prompt, an' git back at three sharp. Every minute beyond three costs you five points off your score.'

"Next mornin' they was a run on Porter's hardware, an' th' ol' reptyle got red o' th' heft uv 'is stock o' shot an' powder. At ten, Jabe he fingers a sorter screech outen an ol' trombone horn he'd raked up, an' off we pegged fer th' tall woods. Jabe an' Len took east, while I glued to Deafy an' towed 'im th' other way.

"Game wa'n't so oppressin' numerous, but thet 'ere Deafy kep' 'is gunbar'ls to a feverheat from th' drop o' th' hat. Howsomever, he wa'n't techin' nuthin', an' after seein' im' do some of th' porest shootin' I ever laid eye on, I spoke to 'im consarnin' it. I casyoolly hinted thet it 'peared more'n likely th' ol' snake was throwin' th' contest a-puppose, but Deafy's hearin' got wuss th' more I talked, so I jest gradyelly left 'im.

"Up to two o'clock my luck was

th' kind thet brings on wrinkles, but jest then I s'prised a rabbit convention an' sacked up four neater'n a brass tack. I thrashed aroun' fer quite a spell livelier than a bee under a fat man's waistband, an' th' fust thing I knowed 'twas three P.M. an' me a good mile off from Salsbury's store. By good legwork I got there jest five minutes late.

"Th' other fellers was all on hand, but hadn't unloaded yit. All their pockets was stickin' out 'ceptin' Deafy's, an' soon's I see th' look on 'is face I knowed he'd got blanked clean. Then Salsbury drags out a slab o' brown paper an' a stick o' markin' chalk an' gits ready fer th' scorin'.

"Sol Adams perduced fust. He had three prairie chicken, two rabbits and a quail. Salsbury figgured on it a spell, then he says:

"'Hunderd an' sixty fer Jim's side. Next!"

"Jabe shelled out his haul. There was a rabbit, three quail an' two crows. They got up an argymint on them crows, but Jabe said they was no restrictions whatsoever in th' contest, an' crows was O. K.

"'Hunderd an' forty fer Ez,' says Salsbury, puttin' it down.

"Job Pepper an' Len Bossett scored up jest eighty apiece, leavin' the score stan' th' same fer all practikal pupposes. Then Steve Lee sprung two tree squirrels, a mink, two rabbits an' a skunk.

"Salsbury was a long time on thet bunch, but fin'ly he says:

"Two hundred an' forty fer Jim's side.'

"I took a look at Deafy. He was ca'mly feedin' from th' prune kag an' 'peared to be feelin' so sad thet I up an' hauled out my own ketch.

"Four rabbits, one crow an' a hootowl,' says Jim Hackett, readin' 'em off.



"I got there jest five minutes late."

"Two hunderd fer Ez."

"Less twenty-five fer bein' tardy to school," says Job Pepper.

"Kereck. Hol'on," says Salsbury.

"Purty quick he says: 'Hunderd an 'seventy-five fer Ez 'stid o' two hundred.'

"Well," says Jim, 'I reckon we've got this thing won han's down. Jest calk'late up them there,' an' he jerked out two chickens an' a squirrel.

"Eighty fer Jim," says Salsbury.

"What's th' hull score?" says Jabe, glummer'n a doormat.

"H'm!" says Salsbury, figgerin' like rats in a cracker-barrel.

"Ez gits a total o' three ninety-five. Jim gits five hunderd an' sixty, makin' a net surplus to Jim's—"

"Hang th' surplus," says Jabe.

"We're powerful hungry, Ez," says Job Pepper, rubbin' 'is chest.

"Spect ye be," says I, sorter grouchy.

"Jest then Deafy kinder riz up outer th' prune kag an', cranin' aroun', he says, says he: 'Be ye ready fer me?'

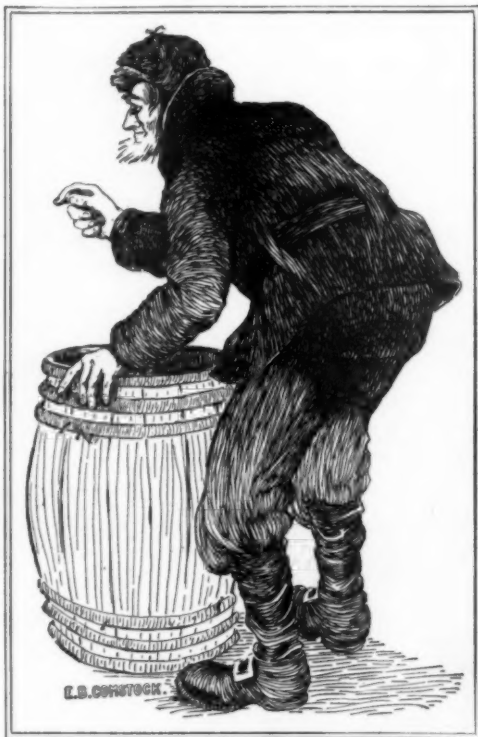
"'Hey?' says Jabe, louder'n tanbark, 'ready fer you? Course we be, you wall-eyed, teethin' hippycrit! Here we be darn nigh two hunderd behin' an' you with you're han's in your pockets doin' nuthin'.'

"Jabe, havin' purposed th' hunt, hadn't calk'lated on gittin' skun, an' it sot hard onto 'im. Deafy he jest grinned an' kep' on a-chawin' prunes. Purty soon he stuck one han' back into th' tail uv 'is coat an' felt

around' mysteriuser'n a hen in a tomater-patch. In a minute he drewed out a fistful o' fieldmice an' throwed 'em onto th' counter. Soon's Jim Hackett see 'em he jumped up an' cracked 'is heels together.

"'Whoa!' says Jim, 'them there don't go. We ain't runnin' no mice into this 'ere fight nohow. They're ruled out.'

"'Who ruled 'em?' says Jabe, lookin' sterner'n Caesar.



"Deafy riz up outer the prune kag."

"'Well, if them mice are 'lowed we're ruined,' says Jim, turnin' pale.

"'Figger 'em up!' says Jabe.

"'It didn't take Salsbury more'n four or five minutes to git th' result an' my side won by a big margin. We took Deafy down an' fed 'im till 'is hide hurt, an' I don't recall no bigger time ever bein' held in Otterville from thet day to this. Thet was—what? A Havanner de Cuby? Thanks! Got a match on ye?"

"'Why—why —'

"'Are fieldmice covered by stipulation, Mr. Hackett?' says Salsbury.

"'I think it's mostly hair,' says Jim, 'but that ain't a-goin' to make no dif—'

"'I rec'lect sayin' distinctly thet size cut no figger in this p'tickler hunt,' says Jabe, pullin' up his shoulders an' lookin' cheerful.

"'Jest so it's somethin' havin' legs was what you said, Jabe,' puts in Len Bossett.



Though a barrier exists between the millionaires and me, it is not my fault. I never so much as suspected it until in the course of some extremely human events, the bottom dropped out of my little world and I found myself, like the heroine of the melodrama, "Alone in New York" with more brains than money, but with not enough of either to make the statement a conceited one.

When the crash came—and of course it was a crash only to the little ant that had labored to build a hill for herself in happy unconsciousness of the impending human foot—a young woman, who bore a strong resemblance to myself, wandered down to Battery Park and spent some unrecorded hours gazing blankly out at the gray water that tossed and floundered about like some huge, fettered thing.

As if I had seen it in a dream, I remember that ferry boats moved languidly back and forth and tugs cut importantly across the scene. Then came a spell of suspended animation of which I recall nothing. I could no longer think. Indeed, my position was unthinkable. Temporarily I must have attained Nirvana.

When, at last, with its usual lack of suavity, the reality came back to me, a heavy fog was rolling in from the sea and my stomach was sending convulsive messages to my brain demanding food. The little blue devils that danced around me, mocking and taunting, suggested that

since I was not yet a disembodied spirit, an attack of pneumonia would only complicate matters. Then, with a final shrill burst of delight at the undoubted fact that the worst was still to come, and I would better cheer up, they vanished, leaving me alone in the grim, raw afternoon to face my problem as best I could.

But the first paralyzing terror was over. By the time that I reached the brilliant entrance of the Anselmo—where, fortunately, my rent was paid for a month to come—I had begun the process of cheering up. From the walls, gay frescoes of one of those historical deeds that one is tempted to believe occurred for the sole purpose of furnishing subjects for mural decoration, glowed down at me. On a great, carved bench the hall-boys, in trim uniforms, sat in a decorous row. The clerk smilingly handed me my key and the elevator man opened the door of his car with a graciousness begotten of many tips.

With grim humor I bethought me that, if starve I must, it would be something to starve in such comfort. When food grew scarce, I could still solace myself with the thought of the inexhaustible hot-water supply, and with a new appreciation of the dainty, white-tiled bath-room I unlocked my door.

"When you get very hungry," I murmured to myself, "you can divert your thoughts by a hot bath and a long, cold drink. Always

there are compensations." And in this frivolous mood I continued self-communion, feeling as if the Past had ended and the Future were about to begin.

For some days to come, the only thing that the Future seemed to hold, was advertisements. Day after day I pored over the papers

confusing as that of the Stock Exchange. Hundreds of persons wanted stenographers and bookkeepers. Hundreds of persons wanted to be stenographers and bookkeepers. They seemed to be signalling each other in a meaningless wigwag.

"Four dollars a week to begin and must not be afraid of work" was the formula of the employers—a formula that finally caused me to turn in disgust from the "Want" columns and cudgel my brain for some other means of finding those who might need the services of an experienced private secretary.

It was during the long hours of the night when my wide eyes stared dazedly into the fleecy darkness of the room in agonized questioning, that the idea of appealing to the millionaires finally took form.

"With the Kohinoor to dispose of, you would not go to the Bowery," was the way I reasoned it out. And since I fondly believed myself to be a Kohinoor among secretaries, it followed that my "appeal" was small. Not every business man, even among those who required private secretaries, could afford my services—any

more than every woman who wears diamonds could afford a Kohinoor. It followed, then, that only a millionaire would be likely to want such services as mine, and therefore the thing for me to do was to find the millionaire.

Even now I cannot see the flaw in this reasoning, though I have a



"When you get very hungry, always there are compensations."

that contained the longest columns of these, scanning the ones headed "Help Wanted—Female" with a breathless interest that the masterpieces of literature have never aroused in me.

Here I found that the "personal note" was struck with such insistence that it resulted in a din as

humorous recollection of how woe-fully it failed in practice.

My first thought was of devious ways—a friend, the friend of a friend, who might ease my path with a letter of introduction. Then with fine scorn I swept the idea aside. I would make my way alone and unheralded, into the presence of the millionaires, offering the services I had to give, with my head up as became a self-respecting American citizen.

The next morning, to be sure, the thing did not seem so simple as it had done in the night. New phases of the question arose, and I made my toilet with reluctant hands. I was filled with an increasing distaste for the role that fate had pressed upon me, but I was determined to persevere and fixed upon Mr. Croesus, whose income is a torrent with which the rill of his benefactions tries in vain to keep up—as my first victim.

Up to this time my interest in millionaires had been of a desultory sort, and I was compelled to resort to the directory to find out just where the Croesus dwelling was located. Then, having no longer any possible excuse for delay, I made my way out into the sunlight, with feet made heavy by a strange unwillingness.

Despite my ruses to gain time—lingering at milliners' windows, hesitating on street corners, and sauntering more and more slowly—the decisive corner was at last reached. With a sigh of desperation, I bolted into the side street and without giv-

ing myself further chance to think, walked straight to No. 01 and touched the bell.

Instead of the agony of reluctance that I had been suffering, I now felt nothing but a dizzy exhilaration. I was assuring myself that I felt perfectly at home on the millionaire's doorstep, when suddenly the door opened! In order to convey the weird impression that it made upon



"Caused me to turn from the want columns."

me I must repeat the sentence—*The door opened!*

Never shall I forget the strangeness of my emotions as that door swung back and a tall serving-man stood before me. It partook of the nature of magic, of thrilling mystery. In vain I recalled that doors usually do open within a longer or shorter time after the bell whirrs, but no whit of the strange-

ness of this door's opening abated.

With round, fascinated eyes I stared at the man and he gravely looked down at me. My tailor-made gown was irreproachable, and my face is usually calm, so I like to pretend to myself that he mistook my hesitation for dignity. At least he waited with perfect gravity for me to speak. But the power of speech seemed to have forsaken me. Moreover, I was not conscious of anything that I desired to say until at last, like the name on an electric sigh, "Croesus" came flashing across my consciousness.

But I was no better off than before, for the name stood alone without associations of any sort. "Croesus," to be sure, but what about "Croesus?" was my dazed thought. Then, just as the position was becoming strained, my sub-conscious self took the matter in hand and to my disgust I heard my voice demanding, "Does Mr. Croesus live here?"

Just a flicker of comprehension, just a gleam of shrewd intelligence crossed the man's face and disappeared, as he sedately answered in the affirmative and I realized that, thanks to the officiousness of my sub-conscious self, I had made a serious blunder.

"Is he in?"

There was a ring in my voice as I asked this question—and a look in my eye, I fancy—that must have convinced the man that millions were a mere bagatelle to me, for he paused uncertainly for a moment and then murmured uncertainly "He is."

Still he hesitated. It was apparent that my unlucky question stood like a spectre between us. He wavered—almost yielded—then caution resumed its sway and he added with an apologetic smile—

"But he does not usually see strangers unless they bring an introduction."

"Ah, indeed!" fell from my lips thoughtfully, as I did my best to conceal my inward state of collapse—"Indeed!"

I wrinkled my brow in a manner intended to convey to my auditor that this rule of his employer's was one that I respected, though it caused me some temporary inconvenience. Then, just as I opened my lips to say—"Just take my name to Mr. Croesus, won't you?" I caught a glimpse of a handsome young man crossing the hall—Mr. Croesus' secretary, I imagined, and my intention changed abruptly. I was not at all afraid of Mr. Croesus, but somehow, I did not want to face any handsome secretaries!

"I'll get a letter to Mr. Croesus," I stammered.

The footman bowed and I turned away, lingering for a moment at the top of the steps just to show that I bore no ill-will to the house and was in no haste to shake the dust of that threshold from my feet. All the way home I chanted under my breath—"Coward—coward—coward! And you have always thought you were brave!"

When I reached home I sat down, and, with compressed lips, scribbled busily for a few minutes. "Would Mr. Croesus see me for just five minutes at his convenience?"

What possibilities the gentleman saw in this request—or whether he ever saw it at all—I do not know. The reply, written doubtless by the good-looking secretary, said that Mr. Croesus was about to leave town and his time was much taken up.

And so the episode ended. I bear no grudge against Mr. Croesus, but if we ever do meet now, the overtures will have to come from him!

My first endeavor to be natural with a millionaire had not been a success. However, since I knew that at the door the Wolf would play about "till Mary did appear," I set to work in a somewhat chastened spirit to wrestle with Mr. Midas. This time, though I loathed my own cowardice, I wrote. I felt that I would rather not call upon millionaires any more forever.

From all accounts, Mr. Midas is a man of heart. His kindness does not run to 'institutions,' if one may so put it, as that of some millionaires does. Besides, I felt that his position in the business world was such that he must know the value of faithful and competent clerical work.

Perhaps my note never got beyond the first waste basket inside the door of Dewey, Midas & Co. If it did, I have received no sign and before this—who knows?—it may have gone toward the making of fresh note paper upon which other idealists will write Mr. Midas similar requests.

It was one night when I lay staring at that invisible thing that the practiced insomniac will gaze at intently for hours, that my bruised faith in millionaire nature once more revived.



"Mr. Croesus' secretary, I imagined."

There was Miss Golconda!

I sat straight up in bed at the thought and hysterically talked to myself aloud—

"Oh, if she knew how horrible it is to know that the Wolf is there—waiting, waiting; if she knew how many things I can do and do them well, if she could but understand how hard it will be to go back to the foot of the ladder—the '\$4 a week and not afraid of work' round, and climb up the whole weary length again, just for the want of a little influence, I know she would pardon me for venturing to ask her."

I maintain that it was not bitterness but only the sad wisdom of experience that had left its trace upon my reckless spirit; but at any rate, when I

wrote to Miss Golconda the next morning, in a refinement of independence, I enclosed a stamp for reply.

She has it yet!

I had seen so much of incompetence, that in the great network of business interests that the Golconda name represents, I saw a place for me. Be that as it may, it has never materialized and I have learned to smile and believe that the loss is theirs.

But it must be confessed that the postage stamp rankles. Sometime, somewhere, it will have to be accounted for. Nowadays when I read of Miss Golconda's nobilities—or the noble things that she does with the money she cannot use—it does not thrill me as of yore. My one comment at such times is—

"Ah—but she kept my postage stamp!"

And if it should happen that we meet in that Heaven toward which she is traveling in the manner of a princess, while I, figuratively speaking, am stoking my way—and if there is left in me anything of the creature I now am, my first words to her will be:

"I want my postage stamp!"

I had done the very thing that the Bible warns us against and received my punishment. The hope that I had placed in princes had come to an end, and it was then that I learned another lesson.

It was a riotous day, with a wind that drove the rain in sheets before

it and howled with rage at having to go around the great buildings instead of sweeping them from its path. In one of its gusts of fury, it caught me, wrenching my hat from my head with a veritable snarl, turning my umbrella inside out, and carrying me rudely along with it as it went howling down the street.

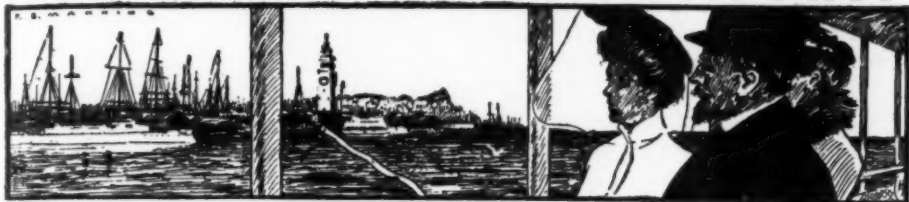
As, with both hands desperately clinging to my inverted umbrella I slid ingloriously over the wet sidewalk, my progress was abruptly stopped by a circle of men with ruddy, smiling faces. One of them was wiping the mud from my hat with his coat sleeve, another busied himself in righting my umbrella, while the other ones bestowed broad, heartening smiles upon me which seemed to mean, "Cheer up, little girl, don't cry!"

At the sight, something took place in my mind. I do not know what. I only know that in that moment my heart turned forever from the millionaires, to cling to the jolly-faced cabmen to the end.



"My progress was abruptly stopped."

A CALIFORNIA COURTSHIP



By Margaret Busbee Shipp

"Carry that suit-case very carefully, Henry. It's full of Indian pottery."

"No thank you, Cousin Henry. My bag is light and your hands are full."

"We seem to be the last people to leave the ferry. Well, you're glad we are here?"

His wife and Fairfax Caldwell assented rather briefly. They had bubbled with enthusiasm over their first glimpse of San Francisco Bay, they had puzzled over the identity of the islands and of the warships at anchor, but now that they had reached the end of the long, trans-continental journey, the unfamiliar faces and strange surroundings made them feel a little chilled and bewildered. Suddenly Fairfax's bag was taken out of her hands, and a laughing voice welcomed her to California.

"But I left you at home!" she gasped.

"And don't you find me at home? How do you do, Mrs. Hall? Glad to shake hands with you again, Doctor!"

They fell into twos as they walked through the ferry building. As Fair's eyes were all interrogation, he went on, "A day or so after you left North Carolina, I was called back on imperative business. It was easy to reach here before you, as you were to stop in Colorado; but I didn't know by which train you

would come, and I've been haunting this place for two days."

"I hope your imperative business has not suffered."

"Shall I tell you what it is? I came home to take care of you! If I don't, you'll be walking around with a bunch of red geraniums in one hand and a bag of oranges in the other,—trade mark of *genus* tourist. Or perhaps you will be asking at the hotel for a room that overlooks a lemon grove, because you like the pungent odor! I came back to help you 'do California.' But in the beginning, I tell you frankly, that to do it thoroughly and satisfactorily, you will have to devote the rest of your life to the task!"

Six bewildering weeks had passed since then.

"Hasn't it been like a fairy tale?" exclaimed Mrs. Hall enthusiastically. "To wake up every morning with the certainty that something delightful is going to happen! When we go home, and remember how beautiful everything is here, the vivid colors in the sea and sky, the brilliant flowers, the constant shifting of bright scenes,—why, I'll always think of it as the time I lived in a kaleidoscope! You're going to row over the sea-gardens this morning, aren't you? You'll have to excuse us, Henry is crazy about the fishing here at Catalina, and I've promised to go with him like a dutiful wife. I hope I won't be a seasick one!"

As Overton helped Fair into the boat, his lover's instinct missed the transparent happiness that usually shone in her eyes.

"What's bothering you?"

"You," she answered.

He plied the oars vigorously until they were well away from shore. "Can't you tell me about it? Or wait a little—here's the spot in the sea-gardens you liked so much yesterday."

With the eager pleasure of a child, she was looking through the glass-bottom boat. Through the pellucid water they saw great, waving branches of kelp, graceful as palms, long ropes of seaweed; sea-anemones, star-fish, and strange, varicolored sea-plants covered the rocks; in and out the crevices, swam gold-fish and a school of tiny fish of the clearest blue. Fair gave a cry of delight. Then, as a floating mass of kelp shut off the view, he broke a piece of it and laid it beside her.

"May I give you this dripping branch for your flower to-day, if I don't insist upon your wearing it?"

She smiled and touched it lightly. Every day since she had been in California he had given her flowers. Sometimes the florist sent a great bunch of roses or lilies with Overton's card; again it would be a handful of wild flowers he had gathered himself.

Suddenly, impetuously, she threw the kelp into the water. "Go back where you belong, to your own element! Here on our boat you are but a poor stray!"

There was a hint of tears in her voice, and Overton, accustomed as he had grown to the quick transition of her moods, rested his oars in astonishment.

"That is what you would have me become," she went on hurriedly. "I should feel like an exile away

from North Carolina. All my life has been lived there, my friends, my people are there. Your climate exhilarates and charms me, but I love the change of season more than perpetual summer. Your mountains, though they are grander and higher, seem bare to me. I miss our own green hills, with the great oaks and pines and chestnuts to the very summits, the slopes of laurel and rhododendron, the galax underfoot. I should always be an alien here, like the kelp out of the water!"

The genuine homesickness that throbbed in her voice, made his all the gentler. "But the kelp you threw back into the water is already detached. It can never take root again." There was a pause. "Can you?"

"I do not know," she answered. "I only know that my life was planned out before you entered it, and I am afraid, afraid, to change it all."

"Of course you mean Webb?"

"Yes, I mean James. You know we have been playmates and boy and girl sweethearts, all our lives. His family and ours are distant in kin, but near in friendship and association, and people have always said, 'Of course it will be a match.' I think that abominable phrase has been the only thing that has kept me from consenting to a formal engagement,—it seemed so prosaic to do what everybody said we would do!"

"When I was in North Carolina, I heard that Webb had several rivals."

"Oh, as for the others!" He smiled at the careless gesture with which the girl dismissed the 'several rivals' from the discussion. "I didn't like any of them half as much as James. I think," she added loyally, "that James is one of the kindest, dearest men in the world, and I have never known anyone more chivalrous or courteous."

"That means," said the Californian in an aggrieved voice, "that when I was seated in that rocking boat yesterday, with my hands full of bait, I didn't rise when you came up with a message for Hall."

some vigorous thoughts to himself.

"I have never had any other idea but that some day when I was quite old,—twenty-six, perhaps, I should marry James. I love every nook and by-path at Deep Woods, and James



"Trade mark of the genus tourist."

"Oh, I wasn't thinking of you at all," she said with suspicious sweetness. "But since you mention the incident, James would have risen, if he had spilt the bait, and tilted into the water the next minute."

Whereupon Overton wisely kept

consults me about all the alterations."

"Would it go very hard with Webb if you married me?" asked Overton bluntly.

"No—o, and yes. I think his caring for me is a matter of such

long habit that it would wrench him to change at first, but afterwards, I am sure he would fall in love with Emily Bynum. She is his best friend, and whenever I am what he calls 'capricious,' he goes to Emily. The week you were in North Carolina," she smiled mischievously, "he was with her most of the time!"

Overton had gone East on a two months' holiday, his first stopping point being in the Carolina mountains, where an invalid uncle had gone in search of health. There he had met Fair, to whom he attached himself with such promptitude and vigor, that his uncle felt obliged to interpose.

"Why, I thought you were a most indifferent fellow! What do you mean by losing your head over that pretty piece of mortgaged property?"

"That I'm going to try to lift the mortgage; if there is one, I think the title is defective."

They rode and danced together until the day came when Fair was to leave for California. She had looked forward to the trip for months, but the zest seemed to have gone out of it. "One would think he was the whole of California!" she told herself angrily, without the least suspicion of being absurd. "I'm sure Tahoe and Yosemite are there, if he isn't!"

Her pride flamed up at his nonchalant goodbye, and she resolutely banished the thought of him until the day they met at the ferry. As his strong hand closed over hers, she felt, with a rush of new and complex emotion, as if her life had only that moment begun. With maiden ignorance she stubbornly resisted the tide of deeper feeling and tried to keep to the old moorings and the familiar, shallow waters of her quiet affection for James.

"I wish we were more alike," she said wistfully.

"What are the tremendous differences?"

"Oh, there are too many to enumerate! It begins the very first thing in the morning, when you eat cold graham bread for breakfast (fancy it!) and I want hot beaten biscuit. Do you remember how funny you thought it was for me to take a nap every afternoon?"

"But I'm very grateful for the custom now," said Overton, "since you declare your roses are due to it. I am equally pleased with the Southern fashion of giving surnames to girls, for no other name would have suited you as well as the one you have, Lady Fair."

"We don't even talk alike. The other day I called your attention to a pretty little branch, and you looked wildly around for a tree!"

"I had never heard a creek called a branch before," he said humbly, "but I have added it to my vocabulary. As to the difference in the way we speak, I think that will have to stand. I don't want you to say 'Sowth' and you mustn't insist on my saying 'See-outh'," he caricatured their accents broadly. "But your words are music to me, and I don't want a bit of change in them, not an 'r' incorporated."

"I use 'r' just as much as you do, Mistah Ahthuh Ovahton!" she protested vehemently.

Overton shook with laughter. "The fates are against you, Lady Fair! you're destined all through your life to bear a name you couldn't pronounce to save it! How old shall I have to be before you stop calling me Arthur and begin with 'sir'? I love the way you Southern women say sir. 'Suh',—no, that isn't it—it's a soft, slurring sound quite beyond letters to express, and illim-

itably sweet. I shall feel compensated for old age when you begin to say 'sir'!"

"You mustn't talk so. Haven't I told you I really must marry James?"

Overton made no reply until they neared the shore. He had been treating Fair as if she were a child, alternately teasing and spoiling her. Yet it was a woman's gravest question that he wanted her to answer. He made up his mind that she must answer it like a woman, and not be

speaking of our possessions. Of course Webb, with his large inherited estate, has a great deal more than I have, but I know you are above considerations of that grade. With your deep sense of beauty, you would learn to love the ranch where we should live. I should want you to love your home here, your life here, to care for the things that I can give you, and not to send yearning backward thoughts to the life another man could have given you."



"If that isn't Fair, with a baby in her arms!"

coaxed into acquiescence like a child.

"You will have to decide, Fair. If that decision is against me, I shall abide by it silently, and bless you for your patience in giving me my chance of winning you. If you decide in my favor, I have one demand to make. You must give yourself to me freely and wholly. I can imagine no unhappier man than he whose wife yields herself with the mental reservation that 'it might have been better' for her to have married someone else. I am not

He spoke gravely, almost sternly, and Fair looked into his face with wide, frightened eyes.

"Wait, dear, don't try to answer now. Think it over in your own heart, and tell me like a brave woman what you find there."

The next day the four returned to Los Angeles, and resumed the usual sightseeing, but Overton made no opportunity of seeing Fair alone.

A clear, cool day, when no mists lay over the valley, Overton declared perfect weather for Mount Lowe.

Others seemed to be of the same opinion, for the cars were crowded, and Fair secured a seat with difficulty. Next to her sat a shabbily-clad woman, with a thin, eager face that appealed to Fair. A child of two sat on her lap, fidgeting fretfully, a little boy leaned against her.

"It's a shame the way they crowd the cars, so a body has no comfort in a trip after he pays for it," said a weak, querulous voice.

"Never mind, dear, some will be sure to get off at Pasadena."

"Pasadena?" echoed the small boy; "ain't that where the ostrich farm is, Mamma? You said we might go there when Father got well."

"So you shall some time, Peter, but we can't afford it to-day."

"Oh Mamma," cried the little girls with one voice, "please let us!"

"Me want to do os'ty farm!" wailed the baby.

The noise tortured the quivering nerves of the sick man. "How could we expect any rest? I wish we had never come!"

The reassuring smile the tired wife tried to give was too much for Fair.

"Won't you do me a great favor, madame? Let me take the children to the ostrich farm. Here is my card with my city address, as a guarantee I'm not a kidnapper, but just a girl who is away from her own small brothers and sisters! It wouldn't be a bit of fun to go to the farm without some children. I'll bring them to Rubio, if you'll spare them to me for a while."

Fair's sweet, bright manner, and the five imploring faces won a half-reluctant, wholly grateful, consent. Fair penciled a line to Overton: "I've decided to get off here. Please don't let Cousin Ella try to stop me, and do go up Mount Lowe

as you had planned. I shall wait for you at Rubio."

The car had started again before Mrs. Hall noticed that Fair was one of the passengers who had gotten off.

"If that isn't Fair with a huge baby in her arms, and four at her heels! It's ridiculous, the way that girl is always nursing stray children!"

"It's a habit that comes in very conveniently at home, when she takes care of ours on Sunday afternoons," observed her husband.

The wild and riotous delight of the five young Mullens compensated Fair for the loss of Mount Lowe. They saw big ostriches, and ostriches just hatched, and bare-legged ostriches from the "Noo-by-an-desert." There followed an ostrich-plucking, and when a boy rode one of the birds, for a dread moment Fair feared all the Mullens would explode from sheer excitement! When at last they took the car for Rubio, which lies just at the foot of the Mount Lowe inclined railway, the baby curled up against Fair for a nap, and the others chatted of every happening in their lives, from their father's long illness to the knife Bob got Christmas before last.

The two hours' quiet had smoothed away some of the tired lines from their father's face, and he listened with evident enjoyment to the children's excited account of their morning. The mother had chosen a pretty spot, where luncheon was already spread, and Fair accepted her invitation to join them. She was thankful she had bought a large basket of fruit for the children, when she saw how hungry they were, and how frugal was the luncheon. Fair noticed that where Mrs. Mullen sat, one could look up and down the canyon, seeing the unappetizing remains of many lunches, tin cans, pasteboard boxes and waste paper.

With delicate tact she had placed her husband where a projection of the rock shut out everything from his eyes save the cool, green walls of the canyon. After dinner, Mrs. Mullen suggested to the girls that a certain tree's roots would make a fine playhouse, and they scampered off in quest of moss carpets and rock furniture. The apparently idle remark that she had seen two lizards

homely fellow, but there was no mistaking the loving reverence that shone in his eyes. "The idea of you drinkin' out of my big old paws," he said.

The girl lifted a sweet, innocent face and answered shyly, "I like it best that way."

Said Fair to her own heart, as she passed on, "You give her what Arthur would give me," and then



"The first time I've been to sleep without bromide."

in a pool was enough to send the boys exploring. She drew her husband's head on her lap, and presently his eyes closed. Fair rose quietly and started up the canyon.

She passed various picnic parties, and presently a turn in the steps showed her a pretty tableau on the rocks below. A young man was catching the water from a narrow stream, holding his hands like a cup, for a girl to drink. He was a rough,

she sighed, "So would James, perhaps!"

Lost in her reflections, she walked on without noticing anything around her, until she was startled by an unmistakable sound. "I beg your pardon!" she stammered in confusion.

"That's all right," said the man heartily. "We didn't hear you coming, but don't mind us! We're old married folks, ain't we, Sally? We

did our courtin' here and it makes us a bit spoony to come back."

"Well, I'm not going to interrupt you a moment longer." She was surprised to detect in her voice a note of sympathy with what, a few months ago, she would have considered a sample of the open demonstrativeness of the unrefined!

As she turned away, she heard Sally say, "Ain't she just the prettiest thing you ever laid your eyes on?"

Sally's nose was distinctly pug and Sally's hair was sandy, but Fair could have blessed her husband when he replied, "She can no more hold a light to you than chalk to cheese, honey!"

"Sally is the one woman to him," she thought smiling. Words of Overton's rang in her ears. In their positiveness and earnestness was the same quality that gave force to the rough words of Sally's husband—singleness of devotion. Yes, Arthur would give her that. She had forgotten about James.

When she strolled back to the Mullens, the husband had just waked up. "My, but that nap did me good! It's the first time I've been to sleep without bromide. A few more holidays like this and I'll be as strong as ever!" He patted his wife's hand. "You're mighty good to me, Mary."

"Now, suppose you and the boys go for a little walk? It'll do you good to stretch your legs a bit."

She waited until he was out of sight, and then rose stiffly from her cramped position, turning to Fair with a smile.

"I've got to get the lunch things washed up, and a clean apron on the baby. I just can't thank you enough for the good time you gave the children, and it helped him so much to

get that quiet spell. We've had a beautiful day."

Fair looked at the little woman. Her hours had been spent in loving service, she had had no rest, but in her children's joy and her husband's relaxation, she had found "a beautiful day." In that moment the girl entered the open door of her womanhood.

"It isn't what one gives you, it is what you give!"

Instead of the big, strong man she knew, she pictured Overton wan and ill as this woman's husband. The thought of someone else ministering to him pierced her like sharp physical pain.

"He is mine, mine! In the whole world there is only Arthur to whom I could give what this woman gives to her husband!"

She remembered the summer that James had sprained his ankle, Emily had thanked her eagerly when she had waived her privilege of reading aloud to him. How blind she had been!

The happy tears were in her eyes as she said to Mrs. Mullen, "You have made my day glad too. Thursday my friend and I are coming to take all the children to the park—Peter told me where you live—and they shall have the very happiest time of their lives. I must say goodbye now, for there comes the car down the incline."

"Oh Fair, you don't know what you've missed!" called Mrs. Hall.

"I know what I've missed," said Overton in a low voice, coming up to her and looking into her face with a lover's eagerness, "I've been hungry all day for a sight of it."

There was only a moment to spare before they had to take the car.

"I know what I've gained," said the girl, "a look into my own heart. I want—only what you can give me, dear, and all I have to give is yours!"



The Burglary at 49

BY W. BERT FOSTER



John Mead dropped off the evening train as it stopped panting under the long hood of the North station, and hurriedly crossed the thronged platform in search of a cabman. A sudden influx of visitors to the town seemed to have swamped the carriage transportation and he was several moments in finding a Jehu whom he knew.

"Here, Mac!" he called, to one bustling cabby. "Take my check. A black box with leather straps. Be plaguey careful of it, Mac."

"Sure, sor, I'm sorry, but I have me fare already, sor," exclaimed the driver.

"Well, you can take the box, anyway, can't you? You've got room for it on top? All right, then; I'll walk."

"Oh, sor, I can take the box for ye as handy!" said the man, and hurried away towards the baggage-room.

So John Mead walked home to Winchester street. It wasn't so very far, and there was nobody looking for him, so it did not matter if he was delayed.

He arrived at the house, however, just as the cabby was unloading the box from the roof of the vehicle.

"I'll give you a hand, Mac," the gentleman said, and the neighbors observed from behind their shutters, the dignified young lawyer mounting the steps side by side with the cabman, both tugging at an old black chest about the size and shape of a small doghouse.

"Begorra, 'twas a heavy wan, sor!" declared the driver, suggestively, when they had set the box

down in the front parlor which served John Mead for an office.

"Books and papers are weighty matters, Mac," was the reply. He added a dime to the man's regular fee, and then went himself to close the front door behind him.

Mead occupied the first floor of the old house, from front to back. The woman who let lodgings above, dined her boarders in the basement. When the lawyer had removed the marks of travel, and had changed his linen, he unstrapped the box, and after working at the lock for some moments with a rusty key which he drew from his pocket, he finally heard the bolt click.

"Old Mowbry's chest hasn't been opened lately, that's sure," he muttered.

As he was about to raise the lid there came a knock upon his door.

"Dinner is served, sir," said the maid's voice.

"All right, Mary," responded Mead, rising quickly to his feet. He was hungry, and Mowbry's papers could wait. Besides, the old man might be in himself during the course of the evening.

He locked the door of his front room when he went out, and passing along the hall toward the stairway to the lower regions, from force of habit tried the door leading into the back parlor. It was securely locked.

It was a rather cool evening for May, and as the lawyer came up from dinner an hour later, he noticed that the door opening from the landing of the back stairs into the yard, was ajar. He stopped to close it,

glancing for a moment idly into the shadowy enclosure which ran back to the old masonry wall bounding Regent street.

The neighborhood was exclusive, and had once been devoted to the homes of the wealthy. The yards attached to the Winchester street brownstone houses were deep and in their corners often grown to old-fashioned flowers, long grasses, or weeds.

Over the door out of which John Mead gazed—indeed, running the full width of the house and just beneath the windows of his back parlor and bath-room—was an arbor on which grew a heavy vine. Before he closed the door he heard a rustling in this vine, and then the arbor creaked as if from a heavy weight, while a thump upon the sod below seemed to indicate the sudden landing of some creature on the grass plot. Mead craned his neck and strained his eyes to see into the gloom under the arbor.

"Some neighbor's cat," he thought; then closed the door and went up to his rooms without further thought upon the matter.

He had scarcely lighted his lamp, and as yet had paid no attention to the black box, when the bell rang. He heard the maid open the door and then the lawyer distinguished a shuffling step approaching.

"Mowbry himself!" muttered Mead, and turned to greet his client as the office door opened to admit him.

A squat, solidly-built man was Mowbry, his big body above his waist bound tightly in a much worn and faded pilot-cloth coat, the trousers below it as shapeless as meal sacks and not a little tarred. His gait was between a roll and a shuffle, and he wore a round, stiff-brimmed, japanned hat, with a frayed ribbon

to it. He was, in fact, the picture of an old sea-dog, a bit frosty as to hair and beard, and wrinkled about his eyes.

"Evenin'—evenin'!" said Mowbry, in his foghorn voice, greeting the lawyer with a quarter-deck salute. "I was a-passin', an' seein' your light I jedged ye might be home again, an' thought I'd lay by an' hear the news, sir."

Mead pointed silently to the black chest at the further end of the room. Mowbry had been about to settle his stiff old hulk into a chair; but his attention being called to the box he went over to it and patted it as if it were a dog.

"Well, well!" he said. "So that's the box, is it? One spell, Mr. Mead, I never expected to see her again. Fifteen year away, sir—fifteen year."

"A long time to leave valuables in the attic of a hired house, Mr. Mowbry," responded the lawyer, severely.

"Bless you! Cousin Dan'el's folks didn't know what they was wuth. An' I carried the key with me wherever I went," declared the seaman, simply. "Found ev'ry-thing all right, didn't you?"

"I am quite sure the chest has never been opened—until this evening. I unlocked it a little while ago. But I haven't looked at a paper yet."

The old man clasped his thick fingers over his knee and his little eyes sparkled. "Then I ain't out o' season, Mr. Mead? You was just goin' through 'em?"

"That is how I expect to spend my evening," said the lawyer, with a quiet smile.

Then he turned serious again and glanced keenly at the old man. "I hope, sir, that you have reconsidered your intention regarding your will. You are too old a man to quarrel now with your kin."

Mowbry grunted in a way that defies expression. His thick nostrils expanded, his mottled face glowed, his deepset eyes flashed.

"I told you my wishes, Mr. Mead. Them's what I want carried out. They're not to be trifled with, sir. I'm a man that's used to bein' obeyed, if I don't tack 'Captain' onto my name for a handle."

"And I can obey you, sir; but I advise strongly against it," said Mead, quietly.

"You're meanin' well, young man, I've no doubt. But I've passed my word—fifteen year ago it was. When I went away on that voyage I told Ann that she should have enough to keep her an' the child, providin' she never let that man come back to her again. And so I gave her my money—she thought it was all I had, it's likely.

"And what did she do when she thought I was out of the way for good?" The old man leaned forward and smote his knee emphatically. "Why, I learn now that the man—a bloomin' circus performer—was back in a twelve-month, an' she let him in, an' he helped her spend my money, an' he treated her as bad as ever to the day of her death. What business had Ann a-marryin' such a man in the first place? Our folks was all respectable, sea-going people. A circus performer!

"An' look what he done when she was dead! Took the girl with him. She's a circus performer now herself, I hear. I tell you, Mr. Mead, not a shilling of my money shall go to that breed. I'll give what I said I would to Cousin Dan'el's folks. The rest shall go to the 'orspittal. Now, sir, them's my orders!"

He got up and paced the room in excitement, while Mead watched him. Fifteen years he had been in Chinese waters, while his relatives

mourned him as dead. The lawyer wondered if it would not have been better had he never returned to stir the family into strife over the contents of the black chest that had lain so long in "Cousin Dan'el's attic."

By and by the old man cooled down.

"Come on, sir," he said, taking a seat. "Let's look them papers over. There's quantities of stuff there that ain't wuth a broken handspike. There's other papers that'll prove wuth more, I reckon," and his eyes twinkled shrewdly once more.

"There's the deeds of the Bailey farm; I got 'em for a song twenty year ago. Now they tell me there's oil been found all through that country an' a man offered me fifty thousand dollars for it when I landed in New York.

"And there's bonds there—good United States gold bonds, on which the interest hasn't been collected for sixteen year. Let's have a look at 'em, Mr. Mead."

The lawyer got up and crossed the room to the black chest. "They're all here, I suppose, Mr. Mowbry," he said, and lifted the cover.

Then he fell back from the yawning box with a guttural cry, half stifled in his throat. Mowbry heard it, saw his strange emotion, and leaped up to see for himself.

"What's that! what's that!" he yelled, shrilly. "The box is empty! They ain't a livin' thing in it! That Dan'el! Them folks always was thieves——"

"Stop, stir!" commanded Mead, finding his voice. "There is no reason in that. Your relatives in Camden are not at fault. I swear the box had not been opened when I got it from them."

"But you did not look into it there?" gasped Mowbry.

"No. But it was untouched, I tell

you." Mead lifted the empty box by one leather handle. "It was all the cabman and I cared to lift when we brought it in here an hour and a half ago. I unlocked it before I went down to dinner. The thing has been done since then."

"A burglary!" exclaimed Mowbry.

"A burglary," agreed the lawyer.

They canvassed the situation thoroughly before Mead telephoned for the police. The lawyer was positive the contents of the box had been untouched when he went down to dinner. Both doors leading into his apartments were locked. They examined the rear rooms. One of the windows looking out upon the arbor was open about eight inches. It was fastened in that position and could be neither raised nor lowered from outside. Yet that was the only possible entrance and egress for the thief. Mead remembered the slight noise he had heard on the arbor as he came up from dinner. The burglar must have been escaping then.

"But what kind of man was he?" demanded Mowbry, excitedly. "How could he get under that sash, sir? It ain't reasonable!"

"It isn't reasonable," admitted Mead. "It is only a fact—a mystery to be explained. The burglar had an hour in my rooms here. During that time he removed everything from the chest, dropped the packages out the window, and made off with them."

"What for? Who told him there was anything in that box among them old books an' trash that was wuth luggin' away, Mr. Mead?" demanded Mowbry. The seaman looked at his lawyer shrewdly. "This warn't no common burglar, sir," he declared.

And so the police said, after an exhaustive examination of the prem-

ises. The officers took lanterns into the yard and looked for tracks of the person who had robbed the lawyer. But there were no tracks. The grass by the corner of the arbor near the open window seemed somewhat matted; but there were no distinguishable footprints. The branches of the vine seemed disturbed and somewhat broken; but the wind might have done it. And as for a man's body passing in and out of the window—

"He was a mighty small and supple man, that's all I got to say!" declared the detective in charge of the case. "I'll look around and make inquiries, Mr. Mead. But it looks to me as if whoever made the touch, knew about what there was in the chest, and was as good an acrobat as an eel into the bargain! The locks of these doors ain't been tampered with. The window is the only way out an' in that I see."

Mowbry listened with twitching lips, his stubbed fingers working. When he was alone with the lawyer again he declared: "If I didn't know that circus actor was dead, I'd say he done it! He was just what that policeman said—a acrobat."

"Foolish—foolish, Mr. Mowbry!" declared the worried lawyer. "How should he—if he were alive—or anybody else but you and I, know what was among those papers in that box? And, knowing, why should they have allowed the chest to remain untouched for fifteen years, only to rob you now?"

Mowbry went away, shaking his head, and the affair promised to remain a mystery for some time to come. In the papers the matter was known as "the burglary at 49 Winchester street." After a few days something else took the attention of the public and only to a few of the police, and to the old seaman and

his lawyer, was the matter still of interest.

Mead was utterly at sea, even for a theory regarding the burglary. And he was vastly anxious, too. The chest had been in his charge, and its contents had disappeared while in his rooms. If he could not be held legally responsible for the deeds and bonds, he felt that he should have left no means open for such a catastrophe as had occurred. He neglected his other work, because his mind would continually revert to the mystery. In the morning, in broad daylight, he searched the back yard foot by foot for some trace of the mysterious robber.

Chip, the landlady's dog, accompanied him in this scrutiny of the premises. Chip was a little black-and-tan terrier, with an inquisitive nose and a chronic expectancy of finding rats in the most unlikely places. He ran about the yard through the grass and weeds, sniffing at invisible trails which did not at all interest the lawyer, and finally ended as usual in barking madly at the broken place in the drainage culvert at the back of the yard. Chip was always convinced that a rat dwelt in this hole, and about twice a day he went out and barked defiance at the invisible rodent.

The ten-foot wall which divided Regent street from the yards behind the row of old houses easily could have been scaled by the thief, if he made his escape in this direction. Regent street was graded on a level with the top of this wall, and passers-by on the walk could look down into the green enclosures.

A two-foot culvert drained the surface water from the Regent street gutters down under the wall and beneath the yards into the sewer in Winchester street, the pipe passing

between No. 49 and No. 47, which latter was likewise a boarding house. The broken place in this culvert in a heavy rain spurted a fountain of water into No. 49's yard; but the weather had been extremely dry now for some weeks.

Mead searched high and low and found no mark of the nocturnal visitor. This result disturbed him so that he even scolded Chip for continued barking at the hole in the culvert.

"What a fool dog!" he muttered. "You're about as much good as a detective." Chip went back to the culvert after the lawyer returned to the house, and barked himself into a state bordering upon apoplexy, and several times during the day the terrier renewed his attentions to his invisible enemy.

In the evening, when Mowbry came over to see him again, the lawyer was tempted to tell the man, quite as brusquely as he had the dog, that he was "barking up the wrong tree." For the seaman was full of his own theory.

"I tell ye, sir, the man that stole them books and papers may not have knowed what he was gettin'; but them as set him on to the job knew, all right. And who'd be likely to follow me up, now I've come back to God's country? Them Bolters, of course!"

"But, man, they're dead, you say! Your sister has been dead twelve years. Her husband drank himself into his grave five or six years ago. There's only the daughter."

"Well, her name's Bolter, I s'pose!" growled Mowbry. "She's as like her father as can be, I reckon. He took her into the circus business. She's in it now I hear. She's had you an' me follered. She suspected there was something vallible in that chest after seein' you go up to Cam-

den for it, an' one of her circus friends done the trick for her. You know that policeman said it must ha' took a acrobat to get in and out o' that window."

"Nonsense!" muttered the lawyer.

Mowbry was not to be shaken in his belief, however, and certainly the lawyer had no other explanation to advance. Indeed, the mystery of it all kept him from his sleep at night.

Wrapped in his gown he paced the rooms until long after midnight, scanning again minutely every circumstance connected with the burglary. He could not accept Mowbry's reasoning. Whatever the old man's niece had become in her association with the class of people whom the seaman abhorred, it did not seem probable that she would be a party to such a robbery.

"He's got the idea in his old head that she'll hate him just as he hates her," muttered the lawyer, going to one of the rear windows of his apartments and flinging up the sash. "He's as unreasonable as—as that dog of Mrs. Layton's. Both of 'em barking at a supposition."

His glance swept the vista of shadowy enclosures behind the row of dwellings which faced Winchester street. In the yard of No. 47 a light was moving, and this oddity attracted more than Mead's passing attention. He leaned farther from his window and watched the moving light. The person carrying it crossed the enclosure to the wall of masonry. The yellow glow—it was from a reflector lamp, or a dark-lantern—shone upon just one spot on the wall. The figure loomed up tall and black behind it.

"That's strange," muttered the lawyer, and continued to look. Soon the light went out—or was shut off—but his eyes were now accus-

tomed to the darkness and he knew that the figure remained at the foot of the wall.

"A tryst of some serving maid?" he thought.

The night was still; whatever the person in the yard of No. 47 was about, little noise was made. But for nearly an hour the shadow flitted here and there below the wall, and occasionally a glimmer of light was shown.

Then the bearer of the light went back to the house, opened the lower door, and disappeared within.

"Strange doings for so quiet a neighborhood," thought Mead. "First a burglary, and then mysterious nocturnal rambles by this unknown."

Mowbry came the next day, more excited than ever. "What's the house next door to ye, Mr. Mead?" he demanded.

"A lodging-house like my own," replied the lawyer.

"Who lives there?"

The lawyer told him the landlady's name.

"No, no! I mean who lodges with the woman? I see a party when I left ye last night that has worried me. She's the dead image of my sister Ann, as she was a girl."

"Ridiculous, Mr. Mowbry!"

"Not so, sir. I tell ye, that Bolter girl is in that house. I see her going in as I come out o' here last night. And moreover, the show she was with last year is performing here now."

"Is she with it?"

"Not as I can find out. But they never goes by their real names. You ask your landlady to find out that girl's name. You an' these police think old Bill Mowbry is a fool. He ain't knocked about the world for nothing."

So insistent was he that Mead did seek an interview with Mrs. Layton. But he found that good lady in no mood for gossiping about her neighbors.

"Chip is lost, Mr. Mead," was the burden of her wail. "Whatever shall I do? He was barking that loud in the yard that I got mad at him and hollered out the window for him to stop. And he did stop—never a sound but a little yelp out of his poor throat right after. An' now neither me nor Mary can find hide nor hair of him."

Mead consoled her as best he could, but he did not discover that anybody of the name of Bolter lived in No. 47. He made a search of the yards and of the neighborhood, too, for the lost Chip, but to no purpose.

Mrs. Layton was not alone in her grief, as the days went by. Other ladies in the row lost their pets, both of the feline and canine persuasion. Really, it was not so bad in some ways, for the nightly concerts of lovelorn Tommies and Marias were easily excused by those who had not an overweening love for cats; and pet dogs are proverbially noisy in a back yard.

Mowbry, against his lawyer's advice, hired a detective from the agency and set him to work on the task of finding the daughter of James Bolter and Ann Mowbry. This man insinuated himself into the graces of certain members of the circus troupe that was showing in the vicinity, and reported daily to the old seaman. It was a week after the burglary at No. 49, that Mowbry called upon Mead in a state of mind which really worried the lawyer. His mottled face flamed with excitement and—the lawyer feared—because of certain liquid refreshments in which it was not wise for a man of old Mow-

bry's temperament to indulge.

"We'll get 'em—we'll get 'em!" he exclaimed, slapping his hand upon his tarry trousers. "Jest as I supposed. That girl's here in this house next door."

"Are you sure?"

"Certain, I'm sure. She don't go by the name of Bolter. She come here to town the very day you was burgled, to join the show. But she didn't join it, for some reason. My man didn't tell me that. Anyhow, she come right here to No. 47 to board. The detective found the cabman who brought her and her trunk. It's plain as plain can be, sir. She was watchin' you, an' fol-lerin' you, an' she found somebody to help her steal what was in this box!" and he patted the old chest which still stood empty in the lawyer's office.

"I tell you, Mr. Mead, she's got them deeds and bonds now—if she ain't found some place to hide 'em. Now, sir, would you get a warrant out to-morrer for her arrest?"

"No, I wouldn't!" exclaimed Mead. "You've no evidence. It would be a shame, whoever the woman was, to arrest her because of such a flimsy web of circumstances. I'll not countenance the proceedings, Mr. Mowbry."

They had some hot words about it, and finally the old man went away much dissatisfied. But Mead was greatly disturbed. Little as he believed it possible that the girl next door (if she really was Mowbry's niece) could have been guilty in any way of the robbery, his mind dwelt minutely upon the circumstances. She had come to No. 47 the very day he brought this black chest from Camden. But no girl, and no man, indeed, could have crept in and out of that open window in his back parlor. The thought was prepos-

terous. And without leaving any trace in the yard? Nonsense! nonsense!

He walked into the rear room and stood looking out into the enclosures. His gaze dwelt upon the wall of old masonry, and there suddenly flashed into his mind the remembrance of the light and the figure he had seen moving about there on the night following the burglary. What had that meant? Did it have any bearing upon the loss of the contents of the black chest? The unknown, after remaining near the wall so long, had returned to the basement door of No. 47 and disappeared inside. And now Mowbry was convinced that one of the lady lodgers in the house was his niece. Mead went out into the yard and, making sure that he was not observed from the rear windows of No. 47, stepped over the low fence dividing the enclosures and examined the masonry. The stonework was old and had crumbled in places. Some stones had fallen out, and others could be more or less easily removed.

He was not long in discovering a rather large stone that bore evidence of having been recently placed in the face of the wall. It was impressed upon his mind that he had seen a gap where the stone in question now rested.

Despite the fact that the interstices around the stone seemed well-filled with mortar, he instituted a more careful scrutiny. It was not mortar which held the stone in place at all. Damp earth had been plugged into the cracks which, at a little distance, looked like the rest of the mortar in the face of the wall.

Mead went back to No. 49 and to his own apartments, and thought the matter over. Preposterous as the idea seemed, he did not dare let it go without further examination.

When night came he went out and bought a dark-lantern and, when he was assured that the entire neighborhood was quiet, he crept into the yard of No. 47 and began to dig the earth out from around the stone which he had examined by daylight.

Not a sound disturbed him, more than the rustling of the night wind in the bushes behind him. The feline prowlers had learned, for some reason, to shun the vicinity. Busy in his task, Mead did not even glance around as the rustling in the lilac bushes continued. He stooped to seize the loosened stone and draw it from the wall.

Suddenly he received a crushing blow upon the shoulder. He gasped out an astonished cry and dropped to his knees under the weight which had fallen across him.

With the rapidity of the lightning's flash the Thing wound itself over his shoulder, across his breast, under the other arm, and then—quicker than it can be written—he was in an embrace that threatened to burst his laboring chest asunder.

Fighting for breath, feeling his ribs strain under the pressure, Mead staggered to his feet. Another coil of the Horror encircled him and then, striking out blindly with his bare hands, his fingers grasped a writhing, slippery body the mere touch of which forced a shriek from his parched throat.

The lantern had fallen to the ground and, in falling, the slide had been opened. A circle of yellow light was cast upward, and within that glow was shown the man struggling in the ever-tightening folds of a great brown and mottled serpent!

His shriek expired to a mere rattle as the flat head darted towards his face. The blow was a slanting one, but it was as if a club had stricken him upon the temple. Again the

python's head was drawn back to gather force for a second stroke. But ere it was delivered, ere the writhing coils which he now fought so feebly, crushed completely the breath from his body, there was a cry from the house, a door banged sharply, and flying footsteps crossed the yard.

Into the radiance cast by the overturned lantern sped a wildly disheveled figure—a girl with streaming hair, loosely-flowing gown, her lips parted, and soothing cries coming from them.

"Hush! hush! There, there!" she cooed. "Careful, careful!"

The fainting Mead beheld her strong hands seize the slender neck of the serpent. With her left hand she held the creature's head away from her face, but still talked to it as one might to an infant, while she transfixed it with a steady, unwavering glance.

Her right hand she passed caressingly down the mottled body and the coils relaxed from Mead's breathless form to coil again in gentler folds about the girl's own torso. The lawyer fell weakly to the ground and looked up as if in a nightmare at the tall woman standing there in the radiance of the lantern, with the folds of the python encircling her like some strange garment.

"Where did she come from?" the girl asked the prostrate man, seeing that Mead had not really lost consciousness.

"I have no idea. It fell upon me suddenly."

"What were you doing, sir?"

Then she glanced at the wall and saw the stone half removed. A little cry parted her lips again. The python moved uneasily and shot back its head; but instantly she soothed it and then looked again at the lawyer.

"You were removing that stone?"

"I was," gasped Mead, slowly getting upon his feet.

"What for?"

"To see what you hid behind it the other night. But I had no idea you had left this creature to watch the place."

"You speak in riddles," the girl said. "I lost this python several days ago—the very day I came to the city, in fact. I was to open with Marshall & Fiddler's Circus; but the box in which my serpent travels was lost——"

"And for certain reasons you have made no inquiries regarding it," Mead hastened to say, for he had suddenly seen a great light.

"You mean?"

The lawyer pointed to the stone wall. "Instead of your own box which held your—er—pet," he shuddered at the python's head waved to and fro before the girl, "you received a box of books and documents belonging to your uncle, Captain William Mowbry.

"You found among these papers certain valuable documents, which you hid behind that stone."

Stepping swiftly to the wall he dragged the loosened stone out, thrust in his hand and drew forth a packet wrapped in oiled silk.

"Yes; it is true," the girl said. "But I was afraid—I did not know. And how came my python here in this garden?"

"If you can control the beast for a while longer, I will bring his box out to you. I happened to get the box and the serpent instead of the box of papers which the hackman delivered to you. The empty box is still in my office."

He ran for it and, without waking the others in the house, brought out the old chest. "I saw Mowbry's chest for only a moment when I

found it in the attic at Camden; and he hadn't seen it himself for fifteen years. Little wonder we did not notice the difference."

While he held the lantern the girl made the python coil down calmly in its box. "There are several little gimlet holes in the cover—see them here?—through which she breathes. She has never made me any trouble before. And I do not see how she got into the yard without my hearing of it," the snake charmer said.

"I can understand it now," Mead observed, thoughtfully. "I unlocked the chest (and I remember I had some difficulty in doing so) as soon as I arrived home that evening. Then I went down to dinner. While I was gone the snake forced the lid of the chest open, crawled out, found its way through my rear room and out of the window which was open a few inches. That was what puzzled the police. They could not see how a man could have crawled through such a narrow space, and it never crossed our minds that I hadn't received the right chest.

"Your python reached the ground very easily by the way of the arbor. Ah! the hole in the drainage culvert! I fear that my landlady's poor Chip, and several other pets of the neighborhood, have furnished your snake with sundry lunches and nocturnal repasts; but to-night it evidently hungered for larger game."

"I saw you from the window of my room and guessed what you were struggling with. Usually she is perfectly kind; but for some reason she has taken a dislike to you, sir," said the girl.

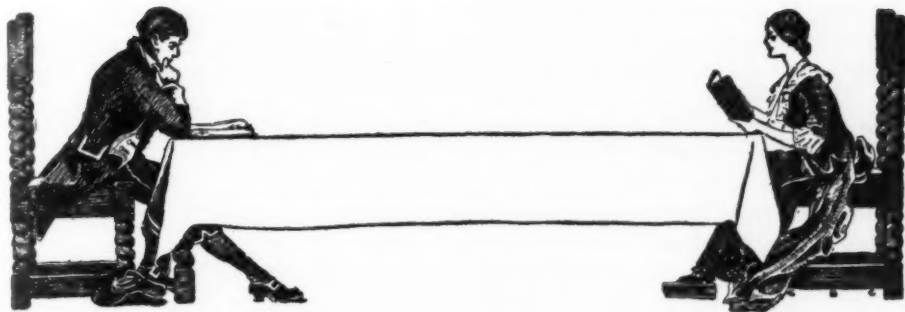
"I assure you the dislike is mutual. Let me help you into the house with the box. And in the morning I would take the beast to the circus. Somehow, a Winchester street lodging-house does not seem to be the proper place for such pets."

The girl's eyes turned to the packet of papers which the lawyer still carried. "And those?" she asked.

"I shall give them to Mr. Mowbry, of course. I have been urging him to be just to—er—all his relatives. But he is an old man, and very set in his opinions. Perhaps if you would change your occupation——"

The girl slowly shook her head. "I looked at the deeds and things. It's a lot of money. But my mother waited for 'dead men's shoes' all her life, and she wasn't happy. There's a fellow at the circus I'm going to marry. Guess we can be happy without my uncle's money.

"There! I'm much obliged to you, Mister. I'll leave the box down here in the lower hall till morning. Yes, I'll lock it. She sha'n't give any more trouble, and I'll have her carted over to the show to-morrow."



The Way of a Maid

BY EMMETT CAMPBELL HALL

From even so far away as the Ocmulgee the plantations had sent their beauty and their chivalry to do honor to the Governor's ball, for not yet had they in this far Southern colony seen the real blackness of that cloud, faint mutterings from which came fitfully down from the North; and if among the gay gentlemen who thronged the mansion of the Royal Representative there were at times sombre thoughts and grave forebodings, they had been put aside for this one night at least, as had been the stout home-spun of everyday for the silks and velvets of fashion.

Decked in laces and furbelows brought from the old land were the maids and matrons of the Colony, and the officers of the Regal, 74, that lay off the town, were loud in their assertions that not at the King's own levee were they to be surpassed in beauty or in grace.

Mistress Jeannett Montgomery, slim, dainty, and eighteen, stepped serenely through the stately minuet, and her heart was light and her eyes outshone the brilliants that decked her dark hair; for was not Lieutenant Sir Charles Westmoreland scowling and sulking by the doorway, and were not the buckles

on her little satin shoes and the silken hose that covered the slim ankles that occasionally gleamed beneath the hem of her skirts, of even newer pattern than those of Mistress Seaton herself, having come to her only the day before from London, *via* express from Charles-Town? Therefore Mistress Jeannett tossed her pretty head and smiled sweetly upon Master John Williston, who had come all the way down from the headwaters of the Savannah for a dance with her at the levee. And at the end of the minuet she rested the tips of her slim fingers upon his sleeve, and from the corners of her eyes glanced toward the doorway.

"It would be pleasant to stroll in the garden," she said.

"Beyond all doubt, it would be pleasant to me to stroll with you in the garden, Mistress Jeannett," he answered gallantly, and they moved toward the doorway.

As they passed the Lieutenant, brave in his uniform of blue and gold, the bit of lace which Mistress Jeannett held in her hand floated lightly to the floor. With a bow the officer returned it. A mischievous smile dimpled her cheek.

"We stroll in the moonlight, Sir Charles; will you not join us? Mag-

nolias do not bloom in English gardens in mid-winter, nor do mocking-birds sing all the night through."

"Nay, I swear, Mistress Jeannett," he answered, as his scowl gave place to a merry smile; "But, i' faith, could we but persuade some of the ladies of the Colonies to bloom and sing there, we should never miss the magnolias nor the nightingales!"

She made him a dainty courtesy. "As a lady of the Colonies, Sir, I thank you in the name of my sisters"—and neither Master John Williston nor His Majesty's Lieutenant might say if the witch be laughing. With a cavalier at either side she strolled out amid the roses of the garden.

"There came an express yesterday to my father, from Charles-Town," Mistress Jeannett said; "and with other things"—she lifted her skirts demurely from contact with the dew—"was a packet of a most wonderful new grain, sent by a friend who has returned from the far East, and called 'rice,' which he does assure will grow most thrivingly in these Colonies, the climate being much like unto that of those Eastern lands."

"And how is this wondrous new grain to be eaten, Mistress?" asked Master John, the planter.

"Nay, I do not know what may be the proper way of cooking it, for he forgot to send directions, but Aunt Dinah did boil it with sundry spices, and then mix together sweet cream and beaten eggs, with sugar from the Indies, all of which she did then bake together in the oven."

"B'la me, but I think Aunt Dinah knew the proper way without any instructions; this must have been indeed a dainty dish," the Lieutenant affirmed.

"So it seemed to me, Sir Charles, and indeed I do believe I could live forever on this 'rice'; and yet I do

not know what I shall do, for father says he will not clip a single hog's-head from his shipments of tobacco for the sake of a heathen dish, and I have no brother who might plant an acre for the sake of his sister." With a little sigh she bent above a rose-bush that in the soft air shook out a cloud of sweetness.

"Nay, but your father is right; there is a great profit in tobacco," Master Williston said earnestly. Whereat Sir Charles smiled, as he, too, bent over the roses.

"See, here are two blossoms, I shall decorate you," the maid said, and fastened upon each silken coat a dark red bloom, and then upon her own breast one of snowy white.

"I do dearly love this new 'rice'," she again said, and held the white rose to her laughing mouth. Then she continued:

"Is it true, Sir Charles, that you have sold your commission? Betty Taylor so told me. And she said also that it was the report that you would purchase a plantation on the Lower River, to become a Colonial, and raise—tobacco?"

"It is true that I shall settle on the Lower River, and possibly I shall raise tobacco, though, i' faith, you have greatly interested me in this new 'rice,' Mistress Jeannett." And unseen by Master John, he raised his red rose to his lips.

"Nay, Sir Charles, I have been for many years in the Colonies, and you will find tobacco, or even sugarcane, such as they raise in the Dutch and Spanish islands, to yield most handsomely. You would greatly err in planting Mistress Jeannett's new grain, for which we do not even know a use!" said Master John earnestly.

"Perhaps," answered Sir Charles. They turned back towards the lights of the Governor's mansion.

Now, it came about that in the springtime Mistress Jeannett was wed, and went to live on the shores of the Lower River, and at the merry wedding Master John Williston, who though slow of understanding bore

no malice, filled the pockets of Sir Charles' coat with snow white rice, that Mistress Jeannett might in due harvest time eat of her favorite dish, and he did thereby set a custom that prevails even to this day.



The Badness of Joe Dan

BY BYRON E. COONEY

Joe Dan was bad, bad innately and naturally, so Aunt Cerise said, and Joe Dan with his feet dappling in the water of the creek guessed it must be true. Usually the very badness of his little personality overawed him, and the hopelessness of his case deterred him from any effort towards amendment. Aunt Cerise was good, he was sure of that, and a guilty feeling stole over him at the thought that if goodness and Aunt Cerise were synonymous, he preferred badness. Things had come to a terrible pass; his philosophy and imagination both failed at this stage of his meditations, but he guessed he'd grow worse as he grew older—his aunt had dinned that into his ears—maybe he'd be a horse thief or a highwayman or a policeman; he warmed at the prospect.

"Jooooo Daaaaaaaan," the voice came like the waning call of a dinner-horn from miles away. It was time to go for the cows. The boy slid off the bridge, waded through

the creek into the grove and hid in the cedars.

Matters were coming to a crisis at Creek farm; Joe Dan and his aunt did not "jibe." Even the neighbors knew about it, and prophesied hanging for the ten-year-old boy. Sewing circles denounced him, as a conversational novelty, after the faults of the absent members had been threshed out. Joe Dan certainly did not stand well in the community.

"Wouldn't get the cows fer you, eh? Well, I've done my best with him, but I'll lick him again when I gets him." Joe Dan's father wanted to keep peace in the family, and he was going to do it, even if it were necessary to whip the boy every day of his misguided life. He was not a cruel man, but his was not the persuasion of words. His rudimentary intelligence untangled the skein of reasoning no further than grasping the fact that the boy was wrong. To argue, to debate, to enter with

sympathy into the cause and cure of the boy's troubles, he considered absurd.

Long shadows crept over the stubble fields, and there were black patches along the road where the clumps of cedars grew. The cows had been driven into the shed, for they stabled early at Creek farm. Chilly mist that crystallizes into hard frost at midnight crept up from the marshes, and threatened blighted pumpkin and cucumber vines on the morrow. Jackson Elliot's pipe burned poorly and he gave up his seat on the front porch earlier than usual and went indoors. Beside the smoky lamp he tried to interest himself in the *Weekly Argus*, but somehow his thoughts wandered and he opened the door and looked out into the inky night.

"Playin' smart," said Aunt Cerise above her knitting; "guess he's hidin' in the hay mow. He'll be sneakin' in when we gets a-bed."

"He never done this afore," said Jackson decidedly.

"Don't pay no attention to him, he thinks we're worrying. That's the way we've spoiled him."

"He's a bad boy, sister, that's what he is. Joe Dan was a nice baby, too, just the cutest thing, Cerise, and say—the things he uster do. There weren't no two-year-old in these parts smart as he was. Ding it, what's got into the kid? I've licked him till I'm tired."

"Spare the rod and spoil the child," rhymed Aunt Cerise prophetically.

The clock on the mantle ticked away an hour. Jackson went to the door again and looked out.

"Goin' to freeze like blazes, to-night," he said absently. "Like as not he's in the hay mow."

Ten o'clock struck in the big

clock, and the farmer began to pull on his boots.

"You ain't goin' to look fer that brat, are you, at this time of night?"

"Just goin' to get him out of the haymow," he answered bravely. "It's a terrible frost, this." He lingered a moment. "Seems to me somethin' cud be done with Joe Dan if a fellow went about it right. Seems like he hadn't ought to be bad. He was a good baby, Joe Dan was." Jackson clung like life to that one fact.

"Cassie and I were durned proud of him 'fore she died, and every night, Cerise, there weren't no happier thought fer me than the time when I got the cattle up and the chores done, jest to sit around and play with him. Me and mother used to play hide and seek with him and play bear and everything. Then when Cassie dies and I goes away somehow he got away from me. I didn't have no business leavin' my boy those four years, for when I comes back I didn't find my baby."

He tugged at the lantern, and finally set the globe firmly in the rickety frame. As he passed out the door a moan came from the outer world that winced before the whipping nor'easter of coming winter.

Cerise leaned her head on her hands after Jackson had gone. It seemed hours between each tick of the clock. A longer night had never come to Creek farm. Things didn't pass smoothly in the boy's absence; time seemed to halt and wait for his coming. Each night busied with a toy or a study, the evening would pass swiftly, and peacefully each member of the family would go to a contented rest, born of a sense of security and a hope of better things. Figured up in a lump the sins of Joe Dan were not so great after all, but the thought of what they might de-

velop into had always made them appear enormous. There were no other children in the family with whom he might be compared. He had always been compared to grown-up people.

The door opened and Jackson came in alone; Joe Dan was not in the haymow. His lantern had blown out. He re-lit the lantern and put on his great coat.

"Are you goin' out to look fer that tarnation boy half the night, and tomorrow killin' day?" At this critical moment she must drive every sentimental thought out of her mind. Jackson must never suspect the weakness she had felt during his absence.

"Sister Cerise," he said, and the very quietness of his voice was suspicious, "I don't know much about boys and I don't believe you do either. Maybe we've made a mistake somehow about Joe Dan and maybe we've been right. I only know I wants my boy back, right now; if I can't have a good boy then I want him as he is. This farm, nor the killin', nor you, nor nothin' else don't amount to anythin' without Joe Dan. I've licked him every time you asked me to, and now I've decided that when I gets him back, I kin get along with him. Joe Dan's got a right here; and if someone's got to go, to keep peace in the family—it ain't him. I'd

rather spoil him all the rest of my life than live a night in this darned house without him; even if he does grow up to be hanged. There now, by the Lord Harry, you know how I feels about it." He slammed the door on his last words as if he feared he might retract some of his declaration of independence.

Through wet fern and dog-wood, through creeks and marshes, under swinging boughs that struck him in the face as he passed, Jackson hunted each familiar haunt hour after hour, feeling a new love for his boy that the fear of loss had suddenly quickened to acute, throbbing life.

And when at last, beneath the cedars, he found Joe Dan with his clothes all wet with the cold frosts of night, sleeping the healthy sleep of childhood, he gathered the little bundle of humanity into his arms with a realization that here was the nucleus of all his joys and sorrows and hopes and ambitions.

Into the warmth of the home he carried him still sleeping—his baby. "If Cassie could have seen him asleep under the cedars," Jackson thought, and the tears began to trickle down the rough features.

"Don't cry, darn it, Daddy"—Joe Dan was rubbing his eyes in the glare of the lamplight—"don't cry. I'll get the old cows fer you every night."



The Paleozoic Humor of Mr. Fitts

BY REX E. BEACH

Up to the Juneau wharf, like drifting thistle-down, Captain Zeke Moore brought his salt-rimed sooty little steamer, now fifteen days out from the westward, bound for the Sound.

As he left the bridge a figure came bouncing down the gangplank, bald, excited and manifestly from the far east.

"Are you the captain?" it began rapidly. "My name is Hatfield, from New York. Same to you, sir! These are my friends, also from New York." He indicated a group on the wharf who gazed curiously at the steamer.

"We're Cook's tourists—just been up to the Muir Glacier. Coming back we stopped here and the Queen steamed off and left us. Yes, sir! steamed right off and left us. It's an outrage. They knew very well we'd be back as soon as we bought some curios. Why, they only whistled four times for us. It's awful!"

"I s'pose you want to go down with me," said the captain.

"Exactly!" agreed Mr. Hatfield, "exactly! We were in despair till you came in sight. Fancy being cast away in this place; not a decent hotel in the village. Awful!" He shuddered fearfully, and gazed with disgust at the ragged little town curling round the head of the narrow fiord.

"I don't see how I can take you. Mr. Fitts here has the only state-room that would accommodate the ladies."

Hatfield avidly seized the possessor of the room. He noted that the man's clothes were rough and of

that ubiquitous bilious tint associated with Mackinaw. Therefore, he forced a bank note into his hand.

"Now, my good man," he said condescendingly, "we want your cabin. We couldn't stand this rough life, you know. It's all right for you, but—my goodness!" He shrugged expressively.

"Keep your money," said Fitts. "The ladies are welcome to my room, but I suppose it's quite a hardship for you gentlemen to sleep on the floor. Ever try it?"

"Well, hardly. I don't believe I could endure it. How one's clothes would look!" And he fled up the gangplank to his companions.

A robust lady raked the schooner with her lorgnette, and the miners along the rail withered under the fire.

"Really quite an intelligent fellow," she announced audibly, at the conclusion of Hatfield's report, and Fitts writhed under her curious stare.

"I trust you thanked him, Adelbert; these people are *so* appreciative."

"I don't fancy traveling with those rough persons at all," complained Mrs. Van Slyke. "Thank heaven, it's only for a few days. Do you think we can trust them?"

Fitts entered his cabin disgustfully, emerging with a war-bag as they took possession, and later when the Newport grunted and wheezed down the inlet, Hatfield approached him.

"Deuced good of you to give us your room."

Fitts nodded.

"Been in Alaska long?"

"Yes."

"What were you doing?"

"Mining."

"Strike it rich?" he continued, bent on conversation.

"Pretty fair."

Mrs. Hatfield called her husband from his curious probing of the unfamiliar species.

"Adelbert, why do you persist in mingling with these people. I'll warrant that man eats with his knife, and has grimy nails." The words reached Fitts quite plainly.

"It isn't very elevating, my dear, but they're such strange creatures."

phant, or he was. They grew—animals, ye' know."

"Sure! Sure!" agreed the stranger, "but I mined this one. Don't believe it, eh? Well, I'm giving it to you straight."

He bent his countenance on Hatfield, and lucent clarity shone therefrom. In his speculative gaze lurked memories of strange adventure, and the New Yorker felt himself on the verge of interests new and thrilling.

"Hold on, I want the others to hear this. Van! Come over here, Agnes! All of you! This man is



"This man is going to tell us how he found a mammoth."

He returned to his seat, resuming superciliously.

"You were about to tell me how much you made."

"Oh, was I?" Fitts, in turn, eyed his companion curiously. "It's this way. I don't know how much I've made, 'cause I don't know what I can get for him."

"You mean for your claim?"

"No, my mammoth."

"I beg your pardon," said Hatfield, stiffly.

"My mammoth. I mined him."

"Now, my good man, I know what a mammoth is. He's a kind of ele-

going to tell us how he found a mammoth. Fancy!"

Mrs. Hatfield scanned the stranger coldly through her glasses. Assured by the limpid candor in his face, she addressed herself past him.

"We would enjoy hearing it, I'm sure."

Fitts struck boldly into the flood of narrative.

"I was in Sitka about a year ago—broke. One day I sat on the wharf sopping up sunshine and emitting a cloud of regrets, when I heard two prospectors talking.

"I averaged two ounces a day

reg'lar,' says one, 'but I couldn't stand it more'n a week. It was awful! I tore out.'

" 'Right for you,' says the other, 'I need money bad myself, but I won't work in a hole like that. When she killed Jim I pulled my freight, too. Just buried him up on the hill with the rest.'

"I began to show signs of returning spring.

" 'Excuse me, pardners,' I says, 'but what's the name of the lady you are alluding at?'

" 'She's no lady,' one of them answers, 'she's the Kuyak Glacier.'

" 'Come again, please,' says I, 'advance slowly. Being a stranger, the idioms of this vicinity is Scotch dialect to me.'

" 'We been mining at the Kuyak Glacier, but we happened to get away before she laid down on us—she killed my pardner, though.'

"Then prodded along by inches, they enlivened the solitude by these humorous details.

"Five hundred miles west, a bay dodges back into the saw-teeth, and at its head the Kuyak winds down through the mountains, a living river of ice; always a-gritting and grinding along to the sea.

"In the sand at her feet is much gold, ground out from the ledges above. One summer a miner panned among the boulders and straightaway built a cabin on her flank.

"In the summer heat the Kuyak shakes her head; lumps of ice fall off like dandruff, and the noise of the dropping bergs is like the bursting of cannon.

"This man had the gold frenzy on him, and he worked under the brow of the ice-cliff, digging, digging, heedless of the icy rain from above. His riffles clogged heavy and yellow—and he worked madly.

"Two months later a trapper

found the skeleton broken and crushed, half buried under the sluices. He also found the buckskin bag at the cabin, and at the sight of its contents the Kuyak madness entered into him. Resetting the boxes, he dug in the dead man's tracks, cringing at the roar of the splintering ice.

"She caught him one day half way to the cabin, a clean-up in his hands—and for a year no man neared the lonesome spot. But the news got out and men began to stake their lives against her sands. A few came out unscathed and laden with gold. They never laughed nor spoke of the place, and they never returned. The many stayed among the sands they lusted for, and the ice melted at their sides, leaving no track but the broken bodies.

"That's the convulsively festal tale with which my spiritual gloom was lightened.

" 'Gentlemen,' says I, 'I'm broke—'

" 'Don't do it,' they interrupts.

" 'How do you get there?'

" 'It's amazing easy to find, but a reg'lar fly-paper of a place to get shed of. You better write your name on the cabin wall like the rest did, so the next man'll know what to do with your sack; also how to label the remains. You'll see plenty of wills carved on the logs. If you must go, good luck, stranger.'

"We shook, and three weeks later I dropped off a sealing schooner at the mouth of the inlet, and rowed up the crooked seam of water between the raw mountains till I saw the Kuyak shining in the light. She lies, a great glistening serpent with her tail *cached* miles back toward St. Elias. The changing lights of an opal flashed over her rugged front in the lowering sun.

"I landed below the cabin, lone-

some and afraid. A cemetery for a front lawn and the mural decorations of your shack consisting of last wills and testaments, ain't conducive to optimism and a flow of spirits. I read some of the grisly writing on the walls and my agitations got incandescent. There were hand-carved diaries that would rattle you like an ague—most of 'em unfinished."

The tourists had gathered closely about Mr. Fitts, and the lorgnette lay neglected in Mrs. Hatfield's lap. A sigh of interest rose.

"Go on."

"Don't stop."

"I can picture the terrible loneliness," said Van Slyke.

Mrs. Hatfield's large round eyes were glued wondering on the open features of the historian.

"Fahncy—just fahncy," she murmured.

"Well, the next morning I watched the glacier. She towered two hundred feet above the beach; a beautiful, ragged, beetling alp; filling the narrow valley with her grinding bulk. A stream roared out from a cavern at the bottom, and on its banks were remains of sluice boxes and long-toms. Not a sound



"Professor Pinecoffin."

broke the stillness of the morning, and the early light on that crystalline mass was a marvelous poem. She dripped and dripped, as solid and as silent as rock.

"I wondered which pinnacle of ice would choose me for a cushion. Suddenly, without warning, a mass split off high up on the face, and sailed whirling downward onto the beach. It drove into the boulders with the roar of artillery, tearing the gravel and spreading a glistening, scintillant storm of ice particles. Then everything was as silent as before—only the brawling of the morainal stream and the drooling from the cliff. I watched an hour before another lump came soaring

off the bluff to bury itself in the loose gravel.

"I packed out all of the sluice-boxes and rockers; then, spreading a blanket, pounded them till every seam started. I washed the blanket and cleaned up fifty-six dollars.

"Next I toggled up a rocker and established it down by the cabin, and at daylight I was up and lugging dirt out to a pile on the beach; when the sun got hot enough to touch off the artillery, and the icicles began

to flutter around me, I stayed out of danger and rocked my pay dump.

"One morning a wagon load of refrigeration came splitting down among the boulders. A lump as large as a piece of sponge cake caromed onto my jaw, and I dozed off. I came to on my face, my mouth full of pay dirt, and a crazy feeling that didn't wear off for days.

"But say! When I cleaned up and the dust lay coarse and wet in the pan, the discouragements and trifling deficiencies of the location vanished.

"It took nerve, though, to let go the sight of that rotten honeycombed ice bluff, and cramp over a shovel when you knew a million tons of hard water hung over the back of your neck sweating to land on you. No chance for a draw. Decision every time. My nerves strained till the enamel cracked.

"One day I had barely scrambled out of the hole when I felt a rush of wind in my face, the ground shook and roared as I fell, spattered by a stinging shower of gravel. A bolt of ice had shot into the pit, smashing my tools and ripping the sand. I fled down the beach, shaking and sobbing till I felt the rigors that gripped me and heard my voice broken and harsh. When I wandered back the white wall stared out over the bay silent and glassy; and I felt the weird spell of the place upon me.

"I knew that some day a ragged fist would smite me and I'd curl into the glittering sand. Yet I itched to burrow into the wealth under the crags. One morning, as I labored, my tortured nerves strained to the tune of the whizzing icicles, I heard a human voice.

"'Good day!'

"I shouted hoarsely and leaped from the shaft, staring and pallid.

"'What's the matter! You're

white as paper,' said the stranger.

"'Oh, it's the silence. You scared me,' I said weakly.

"He was a long man, very lean as to shanks. Thin and constricted. About 30-40 calibre, all but the head, that was 45-90 all right, bald and well nourished. Knowledge bulged out over his eyes, and he wore a Prince Albert coat, a silk hat and an umbrella. A cat-boat on the beach showed how he came.

"'Who are you?' says I, leading him away from the firing line. He didn't answer; gazed at the ice absorbed and searching.

"'What?' he answered, untrancing, 'Oh! Philetus Pinecoffin, A.B., Ph. D., D. S., C. E. How long have you been here?'

"I forced my name on him, and he continued, eager and regardless.

"'Have you noted anything peculiar about this glacier?'

"'Well, yes! Still, I don't know, either; I guess it's just like any other old glacier, only I never lived with one before.'

"'To be sure, but have you—er—noticed any particular phenomena associated with it?'

"'Oh! You bet I have. She's got more dead men to her discredit than appendicitis.'

"'No! no! Not that. Have you never heard of anything being found here?' He was fairly trembling with eagerness.

"'Sure I have; but it won't do you any good; it's mine now.'

"'Ripples of dismay and desperation spread over his face.

"'I can't be mistaken,' he said, and began figuring on his cuff. 'Thirteen is right. It couldn't have come yet. No, it's thirteen.'

"'See here!' I says, 'I don't know what you mean, but gold was found here only seven years ago.'

"'Gold! Is that all! He actu-

ally beamed on me. 'I knew I was right. It'll come this summer—mark me.'

"'What's coming?' I asks, beginning to have suspicions.

"'My dear man, on August 28th the Kuyak Glacier will contribute the most astounding discovery in the history of science. On that day she'll produce the only perfect mammoth extant.'

"'That's right,' I says, pacifying, 'it begins to feel mammothy around here already. She belches out mastodons regular on that date. S'pose you come up to the house now, and have a good rest.' I saw in a minute what was up.

"'I'm not crazy,' he says, smiling, 'and inasmuch as you're on the ground, I guess I'd better tell you the story.'

"'I had a hunch that he didn't have any loose tiles in his roof, but the parable he handed me was aberrated enough for all purposes.

"'Thirteen years ago,' he began, 'I landed here in charge of the Government Geological Survey. We were detailed to map this coast, triangulate these peaks and explore the glacier. We finished the coast work first; then properly equipped we climbed yonder hill and ventured out onto the ice. We traveled cautiously, watching for *crevasses* and sounding our way. At times we heard the murmur of waters rising from the bottomless caves, and again we traversed crystal bridges held thinly by a fragile strand. Death clutched at our heels.

"'It was in such a place that Douglas lost his footing. He fell shrieking from the slippery path and slid over the edge into one of the cracks, clawing and scraping with bleeding nails at the flinty surface, the frenzy of dissolution upon him. We spliced ropes and chopping foot-

holds in the slope, they lowered me. My feelings, as I entered the chill of that ice-well smite me now, vivid and terrible. Whirling and swaying, I was let into the bowels of the glacier. A green pervading twilight enveloped me.

"'I found the shattered body and sent it up. Then, as I waited, my eyes, accustomed to the feeble half light, took in the weird beauty of the cavern. I gazed into the opalescent walls and beheld the wonderful striated laminations of the ice texture—like pale spirit ribbons. My eyes sought the floor whereon I stood, and I felt the hair bristle on my scalp. Beneath me lay the great dark bulk of a huge body, hairy and immense. Reflected light shone into the limpid depths and quickened every detail; the giant legs, the ivory tusks curling out into the dimness of the walls; the huge prehensile trunk. Dazed by the eerie sight, I still noted details, and when the rope came dangling down I left, feeling that I had beheld sights which human eyes should not have witnessed.

"'I did not disclose my discovery. With an assistant I returned and chained the distance from the *crevasse* to the brow of the glacier. The following month I spent in observations of its rate of progress, estimation of climatic changes and other data, tending to show when the frozen carcass would reach the moraine. My figures proved and reproved, that the only perfect mammoth would be forced out at the foot of the Kuyak on August 28th of the thirteenth year. Mr. Fitts,' the Professor concluded, 'it is now August 10th of that year, and I have come for my mammoth.'

"'Before he was half through, I knew it was scripture he spoke.

"'Professor Pinecoffin,' I said, 'it

grieves me to annihilate thirteen-year-old expectations, but that monster is mine at this minute.'

"'What!' the old man screamed, as if I'd killed his child.

"'Simply this. I've got a placer location covering this ground. It runs back three hundred and thirty feet into the ice. I'm entitled to all gold, silver, ores, timber and other things of value, appendant and appurtenant thereto.'

"'It's mine by discovery,' he foamed.

"'Sure you discovered it, but you didn't hold it. I guess thirteen years would constitute abandonment in any court.'

"'He thought for a long time.

"'When did you locate'?

"'August 1st.'

"'He grinned his triumph. 'I s'pose you know you must record within thirty days, or the location is void. If my mammoth is two days overdue, I'll have him yet.'

"'It takes a blamed good man to call the turn on the finish of a two-thousand-year go-as-you-please, within two days, and I was five hundred miles from a land office.

"'Let's be friends,' I says, 'and go halves on the brute; he's big enough to go around.'

"'We waited for the remains till fall. Every morning we'd patrol the ice, peering and straining for a sight of the visitor. The 28th came and brought nothing. September toiled past and still we watched.

"'I grew doubtful, and one morning as we glared hungrily into the blue-green wall, I said: 'See here, Phile, did you ever see animals before you went with the surveying party?'

"'What do you mean?'

"'Well, I remember once in Juneau. I'd come out of the Yukon with a big clean-up. A fellow intro-

duced a new brand of 'hootch', and very shortly I saw stranger things than *frapped* Angora elephants. Why, I remember one beast that came regular. He was a purple bug in yellow trousers, with green Galway whiskers. He used to walk a tight-rope of spaghetti running from my bed to the door knob, singing the Gotterdamering backwards in Chinook.'

"This morning, we'd no more than entered the cave than the Professor screeched like an air-brake. There it was all right. Away back, shadowy, black and mysterious. Pinecoffin sat down on a rock and cried, while the drip of the ice water soaked through his frock coat and thumped on his plug hat."

Fitts paused again, and his listeners poured questions upon him.

"I fear I'm tedious," he said.

"Indeed you're not," they assured him. "It's quite the strangest thing."

"Please continue."

"We got picks and shovels, and tunneled in to the carcass, then 'stoped' out a chamber in the ice.

"It was there, just as Pinecoffin had said; grand and solemn in its hairy massiveness, frozen as brittle as glass. The meat was apparently as sound as the day it crashed through the wilderness miles above us, too. We toiled in the green half light till we'd stripped the skin off in six-foot squares and stored it outside.

"One night I fried a piece of the meat unbeknownst to the Professor. He ate it for bear meat and asked for more. I feared it would start an uprising when I quoted the age of his supper, but he'd have stood anything from that animal."

"Really, Mr. Fitts, you're not fooling us?" broke in Hardine.

The distressed look of the narrator was answer.

"I don't blame you," he said sadly, "but I'm rather sensitive and you'll pardon me if I don't finish."

They laid detaining hands on him, and he was forced back.

Mrs. Hatfield blighted the sceptic with a glance. "Please continue, Mr. Fitts," she begged.

His looks were effusive of thanks, as he resumed.

1900 B. C. Spring Mammoth with Dumplings."

"He seemed struck with the idea.

" 'Now,' said I, 'you get back to Seattle and charter a cold storage boat, while I guard the flesh.'

"A week after Coffie left it began to snow.

"In ten days the cave was drifted over, and our pet began doing time



"Now my good man, we could not stand this rough life, you know."

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"It was so late now that I knew winter would soon shut us in.

" 'Piney,' says I, 'if this meat was in Frisco, we could sell it for \$5 a pound, \$10,000 a ton, or \$70,000, outside of the skin and bones. Imagine the fad we could inaugurate by advertising 'Prehistoric suppers for theater parties.' Wouldn't a menu be a hit with this: 'Fresh

again. It was a terrible winter, cold and bitter, and there was but little game in the hills, which forced me to rustle hard for grub. I didn't want to eat our Mammoth at \$5 a pound, when I could kill fresh meat.

"As spring approached, I noted constantly increasing wolf signs on the hills. The tracks were everywhere, and I often glimpsed the

gaunt gray brutes, famished and fierce. One day in crossing the glacier I dropped my Winchester, and it took hours of weary labor to recover it from the *crevasse*. I found it jammed and broken, nearly past mending. Then I was glad, indeed, of our monster. The next day I tunneled in to the cave and chipped off a chunk of meat, coeval with Father Adam, and it was fine.

"I was awakened that night by the dismal howl of a wolf pack, and heard the scurry of feet about the cabin. The hellish din lasted till the tardy daylight showed the beach swarming with them. They came like vultures, dropping off the hills, ravening at the smell of meat, and tearing each other in their struggles at the cavern mouth.

"Imagine me held prisoner by a caucus of blood-maddened wolves, as they gorged \$70,000 worth of archaic beefsteak. I fell to on that Winchester, working feverishly for fifty hours. And the mountains oozed wolves from every gully. They appeared like specks, down the bay and on the hills, resolving into pairs and packs, howling, leaping and slaving. They boiled at the foot of the glacier, a writhing, shrieking gray mass of ragged fur, that tramped the loose snow as smooth as golf-links, packed and bloody.

"On the third day I opened fire. It was like a rabbit kicking mud-balls at the Sphinx. I spoiled a tubful of cartridges before they left. The survivors looked fat and contented as they trotted out of range.

"I knew before I entered the cavern over the barricade of bodies, what would greet me. There it lay, as clean and bare as the bleaching sand-scoured timbers of a stranded ship, and I sat among the bones and wept as Philetus had done.

"A week later he landed at the bay, and snow-shoed back over the melting crust to the cabin, where I was eating *sauté* of wolf. He was a game loser, though, and did a good deal to cheer me up. When the snow went off we got the skeleton out, numbering the bones, and assembling them on the beach for shipment.

"The spring opened up sudden and hot, and we'd no sooner got the framework out of the cave than the Kuyak began to perspire. The sun beamed strong and bright, and the icebergs commenced to drop.

"One morning the smoke of the Elihu Thompson showed down the bay, coming for her cargo, but as we watched her threading up the inlet, at our backs came a roar that was the grand-daddy of anything I ever heard. It simply fluttered our eardrums like rags in a gale.

"An acre of ice, big as the Call Building in Frisco, had peeled off from the cliff, and soared out of the dizzy heights. It ground our precious bone-heap into tooth-powder under a hillock of shattered bergs that would take weeks to thaw.

"That's about all. The Thompson pulled out taking the Professor a broken and soured man. We only saved the skin. It's aboard here now."

Fitts relapsed into meditative sadness, broken at last by the wondering exclamations and ready sympathy of his hearers. "Certainly! If you want to see the skin, we'll go below."

He led them into the vitals of the ill-smelling steamer, climbing down grimy ladders and worming through low, tortuous passages, filthy and black. He was genial and courteous, though amazingly awkward. Each time he tramped heavily on a



"I shouted hoarsely and leaped from the shaft, staring and pallid."

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lady's garment, his apologies rose fertile and profuse. So insistent were his attentions that the dripping oil of his lantern mottled their dresses copiously.

"Isn't it terrible," complained Mrs. Van Slyke. "I'm sorry I came."

"He's simply ruined my dress," whispered her daughter, "and papa's clothes are a sight. Oh, what a terrible odor."

They had squeezed through the greasy engine-room and entered the forward hold where the cargo lay. Here a stench assailed them, the horrid sickening smell of raw skins battened into the tight quarters for weeks past. In the dim flicker they saw a huge pile of burlapped bundles. Fitts slit a covering with his knife.

"Here's the skin, in these bundles. Feel the hair? Yes, longer and coarser than anything nowadays."

"Let us get out of here quickly," wailed Mrs. Hatfield, "I'm going to faint."

Mr. Fitts was at her side, trampling her skirts and spattering grease in a vain attempt at relief.

In the sweet breezes of the upper deck they vainly strove to right their toilets.

"I at least have the satisfaction of knowing that it was spoiled in the pursuit of knowledge," said the lady, surveying the remains of her gown with dignity.

"How can we thank you for your intensely interesting evening?" said Hatfield, ruefully regarding a rent in his coat.

"Should you require any assistance in financing your skin," he added, "or in gaining consideration among the scientific institutions, I should feel honored." He motioned grandly.

Fitts left them immersed in discussion, and Captain Moore found them steeped in a foam of theory and conjecture.

"A most intelligent young man, that Fitts," said Hatfield.

"You bet he is," agreed the captain. "He stayed in my cabin all the way up from Seattle."

"From Seattle! Why, he's been in Alaska two years," asserted Hardine.

"Nonsense! What's he been filling you up on? He's the worst josh in Frisco."

Mr. Hatfield, as spokesman, cleared his throat, while the others dwelt intently on his words.

"Who is this—Mr. Fitts?"

"You must have heard of him, the young club man and Frisco society ornament? He's the junior partner in the firm that owns this line of steamers. He takes a trip with me every summer, 'way out to Dutch Harbor, looking after the Company's stores and collecting skins and furs from the trading posts. Maybe he showed you some of the bear skins in the for'ard hold. We picked up a fine lot this trip."

Miss Van Slyke's laughter rippled out in the darkness, amused and girlish—and quite alone.

"Oh, yes! He showed us the bear skins."

Personal Pages by the Publishers

From the day of its planning, those who organized THE RED BOOK CORPORATION to publish THE RED BOOK set their mark high, to make a magazine which would be a success alike in the view of readers and of advertisers. Of course, the conditions are inextricably intermingled: First, make a magazine that attracts readers in increasing number; second, compel circulation to grow by force of merit; third, command advertising by force of large and growing circulation; fourth, produce results for advertisers by virtue of the confidence created among readers by an invariably worthy publication.

Begin with the covers. Is there a magazine in the country that has offered the succession of attractive, brilliant, artistic, poster-like covers equal to those of THE RED BOOK for the last year? This month's cover is a portrait of Miss Alice de Winton, leading lady in the theatrical company which Mr. Charles Hawtrey brought from England to play "The Man from Blankley's." The portrait was painted from life by Gustavus C. Widney for THE RED BOOK. Next month's cover likewise is one in which we take special pride for its artistic beauty.

Seventeen beautiful portrait studies each month from the leading American and European photographers, have given THE RED BOOK a pictorial value admittedly unique, but all our past efforts in this direction are to be outdone in the future. Beginning with the April number there will be a monthly feature of nine specially posed portrait studies, from the studio of Falk of New York, and these will be supplemented by eight others from recognized photographers of the highest rank.

In its literary quality THE RED BOOK speaks for itself month by month. It has brought out more

than one young writer who is now rising to the highest fame in the magazine world. But THE RED BOOK has not been made up of contributions of unknowns. The most eminent names in current fiction have been found monthly in its tables of contents, and invariably with their best work. For the near future many stories by the recognized fiction writers of to-day are in hand, to enliven the pages of the magazine, and the most exacting standard will be maintained as in the past.

The most significant change in the typographical and mechanical characteristics of THE RED BOOK will begin with the next number, that for April. High class coated paper has been introduced throughout the magazine, as a substitute for the rough or "egg shell" paper which has been used heretofore in part, and which, while producing a beautiful typographical effect for reading matter, does not permit the best results in illustration. Hereafter, half-tones will be used throughout the magazine, and the standard of art as well as typography will be greatly improved thereby.

And the evidence for all this? You can find it anywhere. As to its increasing merits, THE RED BOOK can speak for itself to any observant reader. As to the character and quantity of its advertising patronage, its advertising pages are unimpeachable testimony. As to the circulation, you can learn that from any one.

Ask the nearest news agent.

That is a phrase which the publishers cannot too often repeat. We are willing to have you seek the testimony of your nearest neighbor, so confident are we of the form it will take. It is a gratifying sign when every news agent you see says, "THE RED BOOK? It is selling right

Personal Pages by the Publishers

along with Munsey's Magazine now."

We were 25,000 short in January, and if the installation of machinery now under way were completed in time to take advantage of it for the current month, the 50,000 increase which we would make to this edition, would not more than satisfy the actual orders for March RED BOOKS. The only complaint we get from newsdealers is that they cannot get enough magazines, and straining the capacity to the limit, we cannot provide the necessary increase each month fast enough, until the improved facilities now being introduced are available.

Outside of its recognized artistic and literary excellence, THE RED BOOK has been a marvelous commercial success. Never before has a publication been given such prompt recognition by the old timers, the recognized "standard magazines," who have the success of years behind them. THE RED BOOK, by its rapid development, is to be reckoned with, and that fact is admitted in every magazine office in the country. But THE RED BOOK does not intentionally cross swords with its competitors. It firmly believes in the trite phrase, "Live and let live." It appreciates fully the high standing and eminent literary excellence of such great magazines as "The Century" and "Harpers"; it admires the energy and sagacity that made "Munsey's," the pioneer ten-cent magazine, attain its tremendous circulation; it recognizes with pleasure the dignified attitude and the mighty success of "Everybody's," which has grown so rapidly in the last year. But THE RED BOOK as well must be reckoned with now. It is on the advertisers' lists in the "make good" class. The President of THE RED BOOK CORPORATION recently had occasion to visit the heads of the big

agencies in New York. The words of praise and congratulation which he received on all sides at that time are an additional incentive to do better and bigger things, to make THE RED BOOK's circulation grow even more rapidly, and to produce even greater results for the advertisers who patronize its pages.

Among the advertising pages which follow in the present number of THE RED BOOK will be found some *fac similes* letters and post cards of special significance to advertisers, and not without interest to readers. We feel justified in calling your attention to them as indicating the wide range of circulation of this magazine, and its efficacy in producing business for advertisers.

A picturesque page is that made up of *fac simile* showing THE RED BOOK influence in Russia, Central America and Honolulu. Our Russian correspondent manifestly has heard some good things of the American magazine, and asks to see it. From Honduras, Central America, comes a communication to the Orangeine Chemical Company, inspired by its advertisement in THE RED BOOK, and from Honolulu, Hawaii, an order to the Importers & Manufacturers Millinery Company for a hat advertised in THE RED BOOK. It is such results as this that inspire the numerous letters which we receive from successful advertisers, like those reproduced in *fac simile* from Charles L. Bartlett, President of the Orangeine Chemical Company and from S. H. Gunder, proprietor of the Dr. E. L. Graves Tooth Powder Company. If you have any uncertainty remaining as to the value of advertising matter placed in THE RED BOOK, just take note of those two letters from recognized masters of high class advertising.